

HEGEL

A Guide for the Perplexed

David James

Art, Myth and Society in Hegel's Aesthetics

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To my son, Benjamin

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Chapter 4 is based on a previously published article, 'The Significance of Kierkegaard's Interpretation of *Don Giovanni* in Relation to Hegel's Philosophy of Art', *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 16(1) (2008).

Abbreviations of Works by Hegel

GW – *Gesammelte Werke*, ed. Rheinisch-Westfälischen Akademie der Wissenschaften in association with the Deutschen Forschungsgemeinschaft (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1968–).

Anon. 1828/29 – *Ästhetik/von Hegel. Anonymus 1828/29; Ms. xx* (Manuscript belonging to the Staatsbibliothek Preußischer Kulturbesitz Berlin).

Ascheberg 1820/21 – *Vorlesung über Ästhetik: Berlin 1820/21; eine Nachschrift*, ed. Helmut Schneider (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1995).

Briefe – *Briefe von und an Hegel*, ed. Johannes Hoffmeister, 4 vols. (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1969).

Hegel: The Letters, trans. Clark Butler and Christiane Seiler (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984).

Enzyklopädie (1830) – *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse* (1830), eds. Wolfgang Bonsiepen and Hans-Christian Lucas in collaboration with Udo Rameil. GW Vol. 20.

Encyclopaedia Logic, trans. T. F. Geraets, W. A. Suchting and H. S. Harris (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1991).

Hegel's Philosophy of Mind, trans. William Wallace & A. V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971).

TJS – *Hegels theologische Jugendschriften*, ed. Herman Nohl (Tübingen: Mohr, 1907).

Early Theological Writings, trans. T. M. Knox (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1971).

Hotho 1823 – *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Kunst. Berlin 1823. Nachgeschrieben von Henrich Gustav Hotho*, ed. Annemarie Gethmann-Siefert. *G. W. F. Hegel: Vorlesungen. Ausgewählte Nachschriften und Manuskripte*, Band 2 (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1998).

Kehler 1826 – Philosophie der Kunst oder Ästhetik nach Hegel. Im Sommer 1826 Mitschrift Friedrich Carl Hermann Victor von Kehler, eds. Annemarie Gethmann-Siefert and Bernadette Collenberg-Plotnikov in collaboration with Francesca Iannelli and Karsten Berr (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 2004).

Libelt 1828/29 – Ästhetik nach Prof. Hegel im Winter Semester 1828/29 Mitschrift Karol Libelt (Manuscript belonging to the Jagiellonian Library Cracow).

PhG – *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, eds. Wolfgang Bonsiepen and Reinhard Heede. GW Vol. 9.

Phenomenology of Spirit, trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977).

PR – *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts*, in *Werke*, eds. Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1970), Vol. 7.

Elements of the Philosophy of Right, trans. H. B. Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

VG – *Die Vernunft in der Geschichte*, ed. J. Hoffmeister (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1994).

Lectures on the Philosophy of History: Introduction, trans. H. B. Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975).

von der Pfordten 1826 – Philosophie der Kunst. Vorlesung von 1826, eds. Annemarie Gethmann-Siefert, Jeong-Im Kwon and Karsten Berr (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2005).

VPR 1 – *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion 1. Einleitung. Der Begriff der Religion*, ed. Walter Jaeschke (Hamburg: Meiner, 1993).

Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion Volume I: Introduction and the Concept of Religion, ed. Peter C. Hodgson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).

VPR 3 – *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion 3. Die vollendete Religion*, ed. Walter Jaeschke (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1995).

Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion Volume III: The Consummate Religion, ed. Peter C. Hodgson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985).

VRP 1819/20 – *Philosophie des Rechts. Die Vorlesungen von 1819/20 in einer Nachschrift*, ed. Dieter Henrich (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1983).

VRP 1824/25 – *Vorlesungen über Rechtsphilosophie*, Vol. 4, transcription by K. G. von Griesheim of the 1824/25 lectures, ed. K. H. Ilting (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 1974).

The English translations of VPR 1 and VPR 3 contain the pagination of the German edition, and references will therefore be given to the latter alone. In the case of works in which the text is divided into sections (§), the letter A indicates a remark (*Anmerkung*) which Hegel himself added to the section, while the letter Z indicates an addition (*Zusatz*) derived from notes made by some of his students. The unpublished transcripts of Hegel's lectures on aesthetics are cited according to their manuscript page numbers.

Introduction

In the introductory remarks to one of the series of his lectures on aesthetics,¹ G. W. F. Hegel claims that artistic beauty is higher than natural beauty because it ‘is produced out of spirit [*aus dem Geiste hervorgebracht ist*]’.² In his introductory remarks to another series of lectures that he gave on this subject, Hegel accordingly criticizes the idea that art should imitate nature on the grounds that this would mean remaining at the level of that which is merely natural, whereas the content of art should be a spiritual one.³ This last point indicates that artistic beauty’s superiority in relation to natural beauty stems just as much from its content as from the mode of its production, that is to say, its being a product of human thought and activity. Therefore, when Hegel claims that spirit is an absolutely necessary moment of the work of art,⁴ he must be understood to mean both that the latter is a product of human thought and activity and that its content is itself spirit. A minimal requirement of any interpretation of Hegel’s lectures on aesthetics is thus the demand to do justice to this understanding of art. In the case of the content of art, this raises the question as to the exact nature of its content; a question that is not adequately answered by means of the general term ‘spirit’.

Hegel’s philosophical system contains theories of subjective, objective and absolute spirit; and, since he treats art as a moment of absolute spirit, the obvious answer to the question of what is the true content of art is that it is absolute spirit, a content that art shares in common with religion and philosophy, the two other, higher moments of absolute spirit. Yet this response also does not provide a satisfactory answer to the question as to what is the actual content of art. It does suggest, however, that Hegel’s lectures on aesthetics need to be interpreted in terms of art’s relation to religious and, ultimately, philosophical truth. Such an approach appears to demand explaining Hegel’s aesthetics in terms of his logic, in which he gives a dialectical exposition of the conceptual structure of reality as a whole.⁵ Yet this approach faces the problem that it attributes to Hegel the view that art points beyond itself to a higher truth which transcends the realm of art, and in so doing suggests that Hegel’s lectures on aesthetics

need to be explained in terms of something that many people would today regard with suspicion, namely, his speculative logic. Such an approach appears especially unattractive when it gives rise to the following type of claim concerning what Hegel takes to be the true content of art: 'At the most abstract level of analysis, art's content is the Idea, that is, the Concept insofar as it is at the same time the whole of reality, that is, once again, the Absolute, the truth of Being'.⁶ For the content of art is here identified not only with some of the determinations of thought found in Hegel's logic, but also with the notion of a metaphysical entity called the Absolute.

Although it is not my intention to argue that this type of approach lacks any textual support – indeed at several points in what follows we shall encounter such support – I do intend to argue that Hegel's lectures on aesthetics invite an alternative understanding of his views on the content of art, one that allows us to disengage his aesthetics from his theory of the conceptual structure underlying reality as a whole as given in his logic, or from any metaphysical claims concerning the Absolute.⁷ This alternative understanding of Hegel's aesthetics is, I believe, already suggested by his general claim that the universal need for art is to be sought in human thought, with art being a way and means of making human beings conscious of what they essentially are and of the highest interests of their spirit.⁸ For this claim suggests that although the content of art belongs to thought, the relation of human beings to this content is not a disinterested, merely contemplative one, of the kind suggested by the idea that a beautiful work of art is one that successfully instantiates a truth which ultimately transcends it. In what follows, I intend to show that the higher interests mentioned above must be taken to include ethical as well as religious ones, because Hegel's lectures on aesthetics contain an attempt to determine the role of both art and myth in relation to different forms of ethical life (*Sittlichkeit*), so that these lectures are more dependent on his theory of ethical life than on his speculative logic. I shall thus be led to discuss Hegel's lectures on aesthetics in relation to his philosophy of religion, his philosophy of history, and, with increasing emphasis, his social and political thought, as outlined in his philosophy of right. My approach will in this respect be a bi-directional one, in the sense that it discusses Hegel's aesthetics in relation both to religion, which forms the next stage of absolute spirit after art, and to his theory of objective spirit, which precedes his theory of absolute spirit, and comprises his philosophy of right and philosophy of history. Yet, unlike most previous approaches to Hegel's aesthetics, I relate his aesthetics increasingly to his theory of objective spirit, so as to show that it is in terms of his theory of the modern state that we need to understand his views on

the significance of art and myth in the modern world as compared to their significance in earlier epochs of human history.

Hegel will thus be seen to develop a theory of how the significance of art varies according to the different cultural and historical circumstances under which it stands; one that allows him to do justice to the historical phenomenon of art in a way that understanding it in terms of his logic fails to do, though this is not to deny that Hegel himself sought to establish a relation between art and logic. Understanding Hegel's lectures on aesthetics in this way still makes it possible, I believe, to do justice to the central idea that art is both the product of spirit and has the latter as its content, while also allowing some sense to be made of those claims that appear to require understanding Hegel's aesthetics in terms of a form of truth that transcends the realm of aesthetics. Hegel himself claims in his lectures on aesthetics that 'there is a deeper existence of the idea, which the sensory is no longer able to express, and this is the content of our religion, culture [*Bildung*]'.⁹ Although this claim supports the view that art points beyond itself to a higher truth, I show that by this Hegel can be understood to mean only that the ethical norms determining the thoughts and actions of modern individuals are not of an aesthetic kind, as they were, according to Hegel, in earlier epochs of human history. These ethical norms are instead embodied in the laws and institutions of the modern state as shaped by the teachings of the Christian religion.

This brings me to the sources on which my interpretation of Hegel's aesthetics is based. In 1835, a few years after Hegel's death, one of his students, Heinrich Gustav Hotho, put together the first printed edition of the lectures on aesthetics using Hegel's own lecture notes, which, with a few exceptions, have all disappeared, and various student transcripts (*Mit- and Nachschriften*) of the lectures. Hotho made some minor revisions to this edition in 1842 and in the following year, and it is this revised edition of the lectures that has, until recently, formed the basis for all subsequent editions of Hegel's lectures on aesthetics. This edition of the lectures, however, has been shown to be highly unreliable on account of its numerous editorial interventions. These interventions were partly motivated by Hotho's wish to give Hegel's lectures on aesthetics the systematic form he thought they lacked, and they also include evaluative judgements concerning particular works of art, together with some of Hotho's own ideas concerning art.¹⁰

Given the unreliability of Hotho's edition of Hegel's lectures on aesthetics, it makes sense to base research on this area of his philosophical system on the available student transcripts of the lectures that Hegel gave on this subject in Berlin in the years 1820/21, 1823, 1826 and 1828/29. My interpretation of Hegel's aesthetics will therefore be based on sources different to those that

have formed the basis of previous studies of his aesthetics written in English. I intend, moreover, to use the student transcripts of the lectures alone, as opposed to using them in conjunction with editions of Hegel's lectures on aesthetics that are ultimately based on the edition put together by Hotho.¹¹ In my view, given the problems with Hotho's edition of the lectures, this is the most consistent approach to adopt, especially when it is not the case that Hotho's edition of the lectures can be used to supplement a work on aesthetics that Hegel himself prepared for publication in the same way as the student transcripts of Hegel's lectures on the philosophy of right can be used to supplement the edition of his philosophy of right published in his own lifetime. Using the student transcripts on their own has other advantages, even though it means having considerably less material at one's disposal compared to the massive three-volume edition of the lectures edited by Hotho, the size of which can, in any case, be explained by the fact that the compilation of various sources from different lecture series led to the duplication of many points, as well as by the inclusion of ideas whose real source appears to have been Hotho rather than Hegel. For the student transcripts of the lectures allow us not only to trace the development of Hegel's own thoughts concerning specific aspects of his lectures on aesthetics, but also to discover the internal dynamic governing the lectures, which, in the case of his account of the transition from one form of art to another, shows, I believe, that Hegel provides an historically oriented theory of art that can be isolated from his speculative logic or any claims concerning a metaphysical entity called the Absolute.

As regards the historically oriented nature of Hegel's lectures on aesthetics, his turn to an aesthetics of content, that is to say, a historical investigation of art that concerns itself with a variety of examples of particular works of art, long ago led to Hegel being granted a place among the founding fathers of art history.¹² Research based on the student transcripts of the lectures has highlighted another aspect of this historical approach, by suggesting that Hegel was primarily concerned with portraying the cultural and historical significance of art, specifically its cultural and historical function within the ethical life of a people.¹³ In what follows, I intend to develop more fully the implications of this insight by linking Hegel's aesthetics to his theory of ethical life, so as to show that Hegel offers an interesting and largely plausible account of art in its relation to the wider cultural and social context to which it belongs.

The way in which the student transcripts of Hegel's lectures on aesthetics show that Hegel was primarily concerned with understanding art as a historical phenomenon also provides a means of defending his aesthetics from some

of the main criticisms that have been aimed against it. A notable example of this is Hegel's alleged classicism, that is to say, the way in which he bases his philosophy of art on the assumption that the art of classical Greece represents the highest form of art, and thereby constitutes the measure against which all subsequent works of art are to be judged; an assumption that can be dismissed on the grounds that it simply represents a prejudice on Hegel's part, though one that he shared in common with many of his contemporaries. The evidence provided by the available transcripts of Hegel's lectures on aesthetics suggests, however, that this kind of criticism may have more to do with the nature of Hotho's edition of the lectures than with Hegel's own views on art. Hegel's account of the exemplary nature of classical Greek art can be seen instead to rest on wider claims concerning art's capacity to be the primary and most adequate means of expressing certain ethical and religious ideas which have a fundamental role to play in orienting the actions of the members of a given historical community. I therefore also intend to determine the precise nature of Hegel's 'end-of-art' thesis, and to ask to what extent he is able to uphold this thesis.

To understand just why Hegel is to be seen as developing an aesthetics whose primary concern is that of determining the role and significance of aesthetic forms of consciousness in different epochs of human history, we first need to turn to his account of the various forms of art (i.e. the symbolic, the classical and the romantic), which he conceives in terms of a process of historical development, and to reveal the internal dynamic governing the transition from one form of art to the next. Hegel's account of the various art forms (i.e. architecture, sculpture, painting, music and poetry), which features a development based on the idea of the materiality of these different art forms, will, by contrast, only be discussed in so far as it throws light on the transition from one form of art to another and on the implications of these transitions.¹⁴ The relation of Hegel's theory of the historical development of the various forms of art to his theory of the various art forms will be seen in fact to raise a significant problem with respect to one important systematic feature that is central to Hegel's aesthetics, namely, the way in which his account of the transition from art to religion, which provides the background to the transition from the classical form of art to the romantic form of art, rests on the systematic conception of art developed in his theory of absolute spirit as presented in the *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences*.

Although I argue that Hegel's lectures on aesthetics point to some significant problems with the transition from art to religion in his theory of absolute spirit, which turns on the idea that the content of art and religion is identical while the forms in which they bring this content to consciousness

are essentially different, I also offer an alternative interpretation of this transition that is, I believe, more in harmony with other aspects of Hegel's thought. My argument will be that Hegel would have done better to have conceived the transition from art to religion in precisely the opposite way, that is, by thinking of art, which here means the ancient Greek religion of art, and religion, understood as the revealed religion of Christianity, as sharing the same form but having an essentially different content in so far as the ethical nature of this content is concerned. This will involve arguing that Hegel can be said to develop an 'end-of-mythology' thesis that ties in with his thoughts on the development of the romantic form of art, with which he associates the idea of the 'end' of art. It is, moreover, in the light of this alternative understanding of the transition from art to religion that Hegel's views on the significance of art in the modern world will be discussed.

The way in which Hegel's lectures on aesthetics can be used to support the idea that Hegel develops an 'end-of-mythology' thesis will lead me to consider in the final chapter of this book the extent to which such a thesis might be upheld. I do this by relating Hegel's account of the ethical role of myth in the ancient world to the modern secular conception of myth found in Georges Sorel's *Reflections on Violence*. I suggest that Sorel accords myth a more or less identical function to the one that Hegel accords it in his lectures on aesthetics, even though he departs radically from Hegel's views on the nature of modern ethical life, which form the background to Hegel's 'end-of-mythology' thesis. This difference will, however, be made to appear less radical when the tensions contained in Hegel's theory of modern ethical life are taken into account. While in the two previous chapters I consider the extent to which the idea of the 'end' of art, in so far as such an idea can be attributed to Hegel, can be upheld. I do this by relating the idea in question to later theories concerning the significance of art in the modern world put forward by Søren Kierkegaard and Georg Lukács. The way in which I relate Hegel's aesthetics to later developments in the history of ideas will show that although Hegel himself famously stated in the preface to the published version of his philosophy of right that it would be foolish to imagine any philosophy transcending its contemporary world because each individual is a child of his own time, he was himself to some extent able to do this, not least in his lectures on aesthetics.

Chapter 1

The Symbolic Form of Art

1. Kant's Theory of the Mathematical Sublime and the 'Boundlessness' of the Symbolic Form of Art

In contrast to the Kantian tradition in aesthetics, Hegel's theory of art can be said to involve a devaluation of the strictly 'aesthetic', on the grounds that it does not attempt to understand art by means of an analysis of the aesthetic experience of an individual human subject, but instead involves understanding art in its wider social context.¹ Although this is a claim to which I hope to lend support in the course of this book, the transcripts of Hegel's lectures on aesthetics contain evidence that Kant was a significant influence both on his account of the symbolic form of art and on his account of what can be adequately presented by aesthetic means. By bringing this influence to light, I introduce some significant features of Hegel's aesthetics, such as his account of the relation of content to form, and the way in which myth, as well as art in a narrower sense, forms the subject matter of his lectures on aesthetics. We shall also see that Hegel's account of the symbolic form of art already reveals a tendency on his part to understand art in terms of the type of ethical life out of which it emerges, although this tendency manifests itself fully only in his account of the classical form of art, and then comes to inform his views on the romantic form of art.

The transcripts of his lectures on aesthetics show that Hegel reorganized, restructured and extended the section on the symbolic form of art right up to the last series of lectures that he gave in 1828/29.² One important step that Hegel came to take in the 1823 lectures was to associate the symbolic form of art specifically with the aesthetic category of sublimity (*Erhabenheit*), thereby firmly distinguishing it from classical Greek art, which he associates with the aesthetic category of beauty.³ This raises the question as to why Hegel came to associate the symbolic form of art specifically with the aesthetic category of sublimity, and one way of attempting to answer this question would be to identify the various sources of Hegel's conception of this

aesthetic category. In what follows, I intend to show that there are good grounds for thinking that Kant's theory of the sublime, to which, as we shall see below, Hegel himself refers in his 1828/29 lectures on aesthetics, was the most important of these sources, because it provided Hegel with the means of offering a unified account of the symbolic form of art in the face of the diverse phenomena that for him count as examples of this form of art. Moreover, by tracing Hegel's conception of the sublime back to Kant's theory of the mathematical sublime (*das mathematisch-Erhabene*) in particular, it becomes possible to explain why Hegel considers the symbolic form of art to be ultimately unsuccessful in its attempt to perform the role that he sees it as playing in the ancient world, namely, that of presenting the idea of the divine found in the various oriental religions which he associates with this form of art. The importance of Kant's theory of the sublime in relation to Hegel's account of the symbolic form of art has been overlooked, however, despite Hegel's reference to it in his 1828/29 lectures on aesthetics. The importance of this reference has been discounted on the grounds that Kant's definition of sublimity concerns the feeling that an object arouses in us, whereas Hegel characterizes sublimity in terms of the manner in which the symbolic form of art's content, the infinite, is portrayed.⁴

This distinction between Kant's characterization of sublimity and Hegel's characterization of it is certainly a valid one to make; for in his account of the sublime, Kant claims that we can say only that certain objects of nature are suitable for 'the presentation of a sublimity [*Darstellung einer Erhabenheit*] that can be found in the mind'; whereas what is properly sublime cannot be contained in any sensory form (*sinnlichen Form*) but instead concerns ideas of reason.⁵ Consequently, it is not so much the object itself but the disposition of the mind in estimating the object that is to be judged sublime, so that 'true sublimity must be sought only in the mind of the one who judges, not in the object in nature, the judging of which occasions this disposition in it'.⁶ While Kant views sublimity in terms of the disposition aroused in the judging subject by certain, predominantly natural, objects, Hegel, for reasons to be given below, characterizes sublimity in terms of an attempt to express an infinite content which, in virtue of its sheer indeterminacy, is incommensurate in relation to any sensory form or shape (*sinnliche Gestalt*), with the result that the particular forms by means of which human beings attempt to express this content are made to exceed their measure (*Maß*).⁷ In this respect, what is of most importance for Hegel is the question of the extent to which the content of the symbolic form of art can be adequately presented in sensory form, and not the feelings aroused in the judging subject by the sensory forms in which this content is presented.

Nevertheless, despite this significant difference between Kant's and Hegel's accounts of the aesthetic category of sublimity, Hegel, according to the evidence provided by the available transcripts of his 1828/29 lectures on aesthetics, characterizes Kant's position in a way that will be seen to correspond closely to his own conception of sublimity. For it is stated that, according to Kant, sublimity (*die Erhabenheit*) is 'the attempt to present reason [*die Vernunft*], the idea, the infinite in general, but no form [*Gestalt*] corresponds to the infinite',⁸ or, as it is otherwise given, sublimity is 'the attempt to present the idea of reason [*Vernunftidee*], i.e. the infinite in general'.⁹ Hegel is recorded as going on to claim that the shapes (or shape, depending on which transcript one consults), in which the infinite is presented, remain incommensurate in relation to this content.¹⁰ He then associates this conception of sublimity with pantheism and the Jewish representation (*Vorstellung*) of God, on the grounds that in both religions the One (*das Eine*) is elevated above appearance (*Erscheinung*), while being spoken of, or posited, as being in relation to the latter.¹¹

In what follows, I shall attempt to explain what lies behind these claims by showing how Kant's theory of the mathematical sublime performs an important function in Hegel's account of the symbolic form of art, because it allows Hegel to identify certain features that are shared by the various oriental religions that he associates with this form of art. In this respect, Kant's theory of the mathematical sublime will be seen to explain both Hegel's conception of sublimity and his account of the limitations of the symbolic form of art, in which art and religion are treated as being inextricably linked. In particular, Hegel's appropriation of Kant's theory of the mathematical sublime will shed light on his remarks on Judaism, which he associates with the idea of classical sublimity, in which sensory existence (*das sinnliche Dasein*) is made to serve the essence (*Wesen*) of thought, and the idea of real sublimity, which involves the relation of the single God to the world.¹²

Hegel characterizes the symbolic form of art as the striving (*Bestreben*) to give shape (*Gestalt*) to an idea that is still indeterminate; and it is because the idea is indeterminate that the shape given to it is 'arbitrary or a false adequacy [*Angemessenheit*]'.¹³ As we shall see below, this can be taken to mean that the sensory shape in which the idea is presented is essentially a matter of indifference, since the indeterminacy of this idea means that it does not demand to be presented in one particular sensory shape rather than another one. Hegel also describes the symbolic form of art as the striving (*Streben*) for absolute unity; and he explains the symbolic form of art's failure to achieve absolute unity in terms of the way in which its lack of the true content leads to its failure to find the true form (*Form*).¹⁴ This last claim implies that for Hegel the symbolic form of art's failure to achieve an absolute unity

of content and form ultimately stems from the nature of its content, which, as we shall see below, is incommensurate with the sensory form in which it is presented. We therefore need to gain a clearer idea of this content, which, on account of its indeterminacy, does not demand to be presented in any particular sensory form.

As previously mentioned, the content of the symbolic form of art is for Hegel the infinite, which, in his account of the symbolic form of art, is described as being 'more or less abstract, unclear and not truly inwardly determined',¹⁵ and as 'universal substantiality'.¹⁶ Hegel also associates the symbolic form of art with the aesthetic category of sublimity 'because the idea appears in its universality, boundlessness [*Maßlosigkeit*] and indeterminacy', whereas there is 'no existence, no shape [*Gestaltung*] that could correspond to that which is boundless'.¹⁷ In my view, certain central features of Kant's theory of the mathematical sublime provide the key to explaining why Hegel describes the content of the symbolic form of art in the way that he does.

In his account of the mathematical sublime, Kant conceives the latter primarily in terms of the category of quantity, and, more specifically, in terms of that which is absolutely great (*schlechthin groß*).¹⁸ In order to show what it means for something to be absolutely great, Kant distinguishes, in § 25 of the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, between the concept of being great (*Groß sein*) and the concept of being a magnitude (*eine Größe sein*), on the grounds that although something can be known to be a magnitude simply in virtue of its being judged to be a multitude of homogeneous elements, which together constitute a unity, the judging of how great something is requires something else, which is also a magnitude, to serve as its measure (*zu seinem Maße*). In other words, in order to determine how great something is, we must compare one magnitude, which already constitutes a multitude of homogeneous elements unified into a single whole, with other such magnitudes. Yet that which is absolutely great cannot be compared to other magnitudes in this way. It can instead only be negatively defined as that in relation to which everything else is small. All that is given in nature, by contrast, can be considered to be great in relation to one thing but small in relation to another thing. In this respect, the sublime, as that which is absolutely great, differs essentially from anything else that presents itself to our senses.

Kant goes on to claim that 'there is in our imagination a striving [*Bestreben*] to advance to the infinite, while in our reason there is a claim to absolute totality, as to a real idea'.¹⁹ Since the striving towards the infinite that we find in our imagination is linked to reason's idea of an absolute totality which cannot form an object of sense experience, Kant claims that the sublime demonstrates a faculty of the mind that surpasses every measure (*Maßstab*)

of the senses, that is to say, a supersensible (*übersinnlichen*) faculty of the mind. In other words, the sense of the sublime makes us aware of an infinite content that exceeds the limits of intuition, whereas these limits normally allow the judging subject to cognize only that which, as determined by definite spatial and temporal relations, is finite. This notion of an infinite content that transcends sense experience will be seen to constitute an important link between Kant's theory of the sublime and Hegel's account of the symbolic form of art. First, however, we need to look more closely at what Kant means by the idea of an absolute totality which can form the object of reason but not of intuition, with the impossibility of presenting this object in the form of intuition leading the judging subject to experience a sense of the sublime in relation to certain possible objects of sense experience.

In § 26 of the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, Kant distinguishes between two ways of estimating magnitudes: mathematical estimation, which is the estimation of magnitude by means of numerical concepts, and aesthetic estimation, which involves comprehending a magnitude in a single intuition. He claims that there can be no greatest measure in the case of the mathematical estimation of magnitude because the numerical series by means of which something is measured can be extended to infinity in accordance with a rule, with each measure being relatively great in relation to other smaller measures. Kant states, however, that the aesthetic estimation of magnitude has a greatest basic measure in the form of the maximum number of representations that the judging subject can combine in a single intuition; and, according to him, a sense of the sublime arises when this greatest basic measure is judged to be an absolute measure beyond which the judging subject is unable to go in its act of combining representations in a single intuition. For, on the one hand, the judging subject's experience of the inherent limitations of its capacity to combine representations in a single intuition leads to an awareness on its part of the inadequacy of the imagination for presenting the idea of a whole, whereas reason demands the combination of all given magnitudes in a single intuition. On the other hand, even though the imagination can only strive to gain a single intuition of an absolute whole, but is never able to achieve such an intuition, the striving to combine the maximum number of representations in a single intuition occasioned by certain objects on account of their great size reveals a supersensible faculty of the mind whose object is the idea of a substratum of the world as mere appearance, that is to say, nature as an absolute whole.

The feeling of the sublime is consequently one of displeasure caused by the inadequacy of the imagination in presenting such ideas and of pleasure, in so far as this inadequacy makes the judging subject aware of its possession

of a supersensible faculty of knowledge (i.e. reason).²⁰ In this way, although the aesthetic category of sublimity is connected to a feeling that an object arouses in us, the feeling in question is ultimately to be explained in terms of the problem of the extent to which a distinctive content, the idea of an absolute whole, can be presented in sensory form. In this respect, the way in which Hegel characterizes Kant's conception of sublimity in terms of its content, the idea or the infinite, rather than in terms of a feeling, the sense of the sublime occasioned by certain objects, appears justified. If we now take a brief look at Kant's account of the ideas of reason that form the objects of the supersensible faculty of the mind which is revealed to the judging subject through its awareness of the impossibility of achieving a single intuition of an absolute whole, Hegel's reasons for characterizing the symbolic form of art in terms of the aesthetic category of sublimity will become clearer.

In the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant describes the ideas of reason as pure concepts which express the totality of conditions for any given conditioned item of knowledge.²¹ These ideas are therefore to be thought of as unconditioned in the sense that they cannot themselves be explained in terms of anything else, whereas all conditioned items of knowledge can be explained in terms of something else, whose conditions can then be sought, and so on *ad infinitum*, unless we reach something whose possibility cannot be explained in terms of anything other than itself. Since, for Kant, all sense experience relates only to what is conditioned, the ideas of reason cannot themselves be objects of experience. Reason, in its drive towards unity, is instead led to think these ideas in its inferences from experience.²² Kant identifies three such pure concepts of reason: the unity of the thinking subject as the condition of all its representations; the world as the sum total of all appearances, that is, the absolute totality of the series of conditions for any given appearance; and the absolute unity of all objects of thought in general. For reasons that need not concern us here, Kant associates this last pure concept of reason with a transcendental substrate, the transcendental ideal (*transzendentes Ideal*) as he calls it, which he variously describes as 'the original being [*das Urwesen*]', 'the highest being [*das höchste Wesen*]' and 'the being of all beings [*das Wesen aller Wesen*]'.²³

In connection with the idea of a highest being or essence, it is significant that Hegel, in his *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences*, refers to a conception of God which is highly suggestive of Kant's description of the transcendental ideal as the being of all beings. This conception of God is that of 'the essential sum of all realities or the supremely real Essence [*das allerrealste Wesen*]'; a conception of God which Hegel calls not only the ideal of reason,

but also a 'simple abstraction', because its only determination is the abstract one of being, that is to say, the simple fact that it exists.²⁴ Leaving aside the question as to whether Hegel does justice to Kant's own account of an unconditioned being or essence, which must be presupposed in order to explain the possibility of all that is conditioned, but which cannot itself be explained in terms of anything other than itself, I now intend to argue that Hegel's views on the idea of such a highest being or essence have a vital role to play in his account of the symbolic form of art. When taken in conjunction with Kant's theory of the mathematical sublime, Hegel's remarks on this conception of God will in fact be seen to provide the key to explaining his reasons for associating the symbolic form of art with the aesthetic category of sublimity.

Hegel's understanding of Kant's conception of the unconditioned as amounting to the abstract idea of a highest being or essence is also suggested by the way in which he appears to link Kant's critical philosophy to a type of thinking that fails to arrive at the infinite.²⁵ The type of thinking in question can be explained with reference to Kant's view of human knowledge as being determined, with regard to its form, by the pure forms of intuition (i.e. space and time) and the categories of the understanding, which combine representations so that they come to form parts of a single, organized experience, and whose legitimate employment is restricted to the realm of sense experience. For Kant, this means, as mentioned above, that knowledge of supersensible objects is possible only in so far as they express certain demands of reason, specifically, the demand to find the unconditioned that explains the possibility of that which is conditioned. In relation to the idea of a highest being or essence, the limitations to which Kant thinks human knowledge is subject implies that there is, on the one hand, an endless series of conditioned items of knowledge based on sense experience, and, on the other hand, a supersensible substratum, which is held to be the ground of these conditioned items of knowledge taken together as a whole; a ground which is unconditioned in the sense that its possibility cannot be explained in terms of anything other than itself. We cannot have any genuine knowledge of this supersensible substratum, however, because it lacks a corresponding intuition; and it therefore remains something that we introduce only in order to explain the possibility of that which we can know. In this respect, Hegel's claim that Kant's critical philosophy fails to make the transition from the finite to the infinite can be seen as justified.

Hegel thinks that the opposition between the conditioned and the unconditioned, between appearances and their ground, that arises in this way also finds expression in F. H. Jacobi's characterization of the supersensible,

which he likewise criticizes for its indeterminate conception of God in the section on immediate knowing in the *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences*. Hegel's criticisms of Jacobi on this point also help show what he thinks is wrong with the conception of God as a highest being or essence. According to Hegel, Jacobi makes the mistake of holding thinking to be a finite activity which is incapable of grasping the infinite; a mistake that results from the way in which Jacobi interprets thinking as always involving a form of knowledge which proceeds sequentially from one conditioned item to another, with each conditioned item itself being conditioned, or mediated, by something else. In other words, Jacobi restricts the activity of thought to the attempt to determine the causal relations existing between finite entities, because he does not think that it is possible for thought to comprehend that which lies outside this set of causal relations and constitutes the condition of these relations. Consequently, for the type of thinking in question, every content is, as Hegel puts it, only a '*particular, dependent, and finite one*', whereas 'God, or what is infinite and true, lies outside the mechanism of a connection of this kind to which cognition is supposed to be restricted.'²⁶ God is not, in short, to be thought of as one entity within the world among others; and yet it is only such entities and their relations to each other that can be known.

Hegel is here in effect simply restating Jacobi's own position. For Jacobi, reason is only able to uncover new conditions for what is conditioned, with these new conditions in turn being conditioned by further conditions. He claims, however, that our representations of the conditioned presuppose the representation of the unconditioned, which is the condition of the possibility of the existence of the temporal world or nature, in the sense that the latter, as a complex of conditioned things, must be grounded in something supernatural which lies outside it. Although Jacobi claims that we are as certain of the existence of the unconditioned as we are of the existence of the external world, he also claims that because reason can directly encounter only the complex of conditioned beings that constitutes nature, from which reason ultimately derives all its concepts, the unconditioned can be apprehended by us only as a given fact, which finds expression in the words 'it is'; and, according to Jacobi, this supernatural being and 'being of all beings [*Wesen aller Wesen*]' is what all tongues proclaim as God.²⁷

Jacobi's attempt to comprehend God in a way that does not turn the latter into one finite entity among others thus comes at the price of turning the idea of God into something wholly indeterminate. For when the unconditioned is conceived in abstraction from all the conditioned items of which it is claimed to be the ground or substance, all that can be said of it, apart

from its being the ultimate condition of all that is conditioned and the fact that it cannot be explained in terms of anything other than itself, is that it exists. Consequently, Hegel states that this conception of God reduces the latter to God in general, which he further describes as the 'indeterminate supersensible'.²⁸ In my view, the opposition between an indeterminate supersensible object of reason and the finite entities which form the object of intuition that we find in Kant's and Jacobi's conception of a highest being or essence helps explain the specific nature of the relation between content and form found in Hegel's account of the symbolic form of art. This is especially the case when the latter is viewed in conjunction with the way in which Kant associates the sublime with the judging subject's experience of the inherent limitations of its capacity to combine representations in a single intuition in accordance with the idea of an absolute whole.

To begin with, the abstract idea of an unconditioned whole, which is conceptually distinct from, and in this sense independent of, the appearances of which it is the ground, helps explain why Hegel describes the content of the symbolic form of art as an abstract infinite and as universal substantiality.²⁹ The idea of an unconditioned whole, which is the ground of appearances, remains indeterminate or abstract because all we can say about it is that it must be thought to exist as the presupposition of all that is conditioned, while it is not itself conditioned by anything else, and does not, therefore, need to be explained in terms of the existence or nature of something other than itself. Hence its status as substance as defined by Spinoza as 'what is in itself and is conceived through itself, that is, that whose concept does not require the concept of another thing, from which it must be formed'.³⁰ We are now also in a better position to understand the incommensurability of this content in relation to the form in which human beings have sought to present it; an incommensurability which, for Hegel, stems from the content's indeterminacy. The indeterminacy of the idea of an unconditioned whole makes it impossible for the symbolic form of art to present this content adequately in the form of intuition because the latter, as subject to the conditions of space and time, can adequately present only finite objects that are determinate in the sense of occupying specific, intuitable points in space and time.

Since for Hegel, as for Kant, space and time are the general forms of the sensory (*des Sinnlichen*) as such,³¹ the impossibility of adequately presenting the idea of the infinite in the form of intuition in turn explains why Hegel claims that the form in which this content is expressed is of an essentially arbitrary nature. For the incommensurability of the unconditioned in relation to any sensory form means that it is ultimately a matter of indifference

which of these forms is used to present the idea of the unconditioned or infinite, just as long as the particular sensory forms employed tend to awaken a sense of boundlessness through not lending themselves to forming the object of a single intuition, thereby leading the imagination to engage in a futile struggle to intuit them as a whole. This is clearly suggestive of Kant's theory of the mathematical sublime, in which a sense of the sublime stems from the imagination's incapacity to achieve a single intuition of certain objects on account of their great magnitude. Therefore, when Hegel speaks of the symbolic form of art as driving sensory forms beyond their measure, he can be seen to have in mind Kant's idea of the absolute measure found in the aesthetic estimation of magnitude, a measure consisting of the maximum number of representations that the judging subject is able to combine successfully in a single intuition. Hegel thus here adopts a broader conception of measure than the one found in his logic, in which he identifies the category of measure (*Das Maass*) as the unity of the concept of quantum and the concept of quality, on the grounds that something may become something else by losing its particular quality through an increase or decrease in the quanta that serve to measure it; so that quantum and quality are seen to be essentially bound up with each other.³² This broader conception of measure is determined by the conditions of intuition, which involve a set of temporal and spatial relations that limit the extent to which representations can be successfully combined to form a single intuition. Given this conception of measure, anything that exceeds the limits imposed on the imagination by the conditions of intuition can be described as exceeding its measure.

The explanation that I have offered of the incommensurability of the content of the symbolic form of art in relation to the sensory forms in which human beings have attempted to present this content accords with the following description of the sublime given in Hegel's 1823 lectures on aesthetics:

The sublime is certainly to be distinguished from the beautiful. In the case of the sublime, the form [*Gestalt*] represents [*repräsentiert*] a general representation [*allgemeine Vorstellung*]. This form is, however, extended beyond its measure and is posited as not reaching its content. The sublime always contains something that is not adequate, which appears in such a way that it becomes evident that the expression does not reach its content.³³

To sum up, although Kant defines the sublime in terms of the feeling that an object arouses in us, whereas Hegel characterizes it in terms of the manner in which a content, the infinite, is portrayed, the idea of a content that

cannot be adequately presented in the form of intuition must be held to play an essential role both in Kant's theory of the sublime and in Hegel's account of the symbolic form of art. The main difference is that Kant thinks that the idea of this content is produced through the judging subject's attempt to intuit objects which, on account of their apparent boundlessness and lack of form, cannot be the object of a single intuition, in which various representations are combined into a unified whole; whereas Hegel views this content as one that human beings have attempted to express by means of various sensory shapes which appear, or are made to appear, temporally and spatially boundless. I therefore believe that there are solid grounds for claiming that Hegel's identification of the symbolic form of art with the aesthetic category of sublimity was strongly influenced by Kant's theory of the mathematical sublime. This is not to say, however, that the way in which Hegel employs Kant's theory of the mathematical sublime to explain the essential nature of the symbolic form of art is unproblematic. To begin with, there is the question as to whether the oriental religions which Hegel associates with this form of art can be really thought to have had the abstract conception of God found in Kant's idea of a highest being or essence, however implicitly, as their object. It might also be said that Hegel's use of the idea of such a highest being or essence to explain the content of these religions is simply too reductive, with the result that he fails to explain the actual phenomena of these religions (e.g. their religious beliefs, artefacts and images), and to do justice to their diversity and richness. This interpretation of Hegel's account of the symbolic form of art nevertheless sheds light on his reasons for associating Judaism with the ideas of classical sublimity and true sublimity, and in so doing provides an example of how Hegel attempts to understand the various forms of art that he identifies in their relation to the different forms of ethical life out of which they emerge.

2. The Classical Sublimity of Judaism

For Hegel, the symbolic form of art is exemplified by various oriental religions, whereas the symbolical as such has only a subordinate role to play in the other two forms of art that he identifies, namely, the classical and romantic forms of art.³⁴ These oriental religions are Zoroastrianism, Indian religion, Egyptian religion, Judaism and oriental pantheism. The link that Hegel establishes between art and religion in his account of the symbolic form of art serves as an example of his claim that art's highest vocation is

the task of expressing 'the divine [*das Göttliche*]' and bringing it to consciousness.³⁵ It also shows that Hegel does not view art as necessarily being the work of a single artist; he instead considers it in some cases to be the product of the collective religious consciousness of a whole people; and it is in this respect that myth can be equally thought to form part of the subject matter of his lectures on aesthetics. We shall see, in fact, that in his account of ancient Greek art Hegel discusses works of art in a way that brings art and myth, both of which he regards as being of an aesthetic nature, into an essential relation to each other. From what has been said thus far, Hegel's conception of myth can be seen to involve the following ideas: (a) the content of myth is a whole nation's conception of the divine; (b) this content is presented in a sensory form; and (c) the actual presentation of this content is the result of this people's own activity. In the next chapter, we shall also see that the content of myth can be of an ethical as well as a purely religious kind.

In his 1826 lectures on aesthetics, Hegel develops his theory of the symbolic form of art to the point of clearly distinguishing between four different stages in what he calls 'the struggle of the spiritual with the sensory', with each stage being associated with one or more of the oriental religions mentioned above. The stage of 'the complete substantial unity of the inner thought and existence' (Zoroastrianism); the transition to the symbol, which involves an attempt to give the inner thought its 'true shape [*wahrhafte Gestalt*]' (Indian religion); the truly symbolic, in which the form or shape (*Gestalt*) makes something other than itself manifest (Egyptian religion); and, finally, the stage at which the inner thought and that which is sensory become independent of each other (Judaism and oriental pantheism).³⁶ From this we can see that a relation between thought, which constitutes the spiritual content of the symbolic form of art, and the sensory forms in which this content is presented is common to the various stages of the symbolic form of art, as indeed we might have expected given the centrality of the relation between form and content to Hegel's aesthetics. However, in Zoroastrianism the immediate unity of the content and the sensory form by means of which it is presented means that a relation between form and content does not truly exist; while at the final stage, represented by Judaism and oriental pantheism, the relation in question has become severely weakened. On the basis of the link that I have made between Hegel's account of the symbolic form of art and Kant's theory of the mathematical sublime, the relation between form and content found in the various religions that exemplify the symbolic form of art can be defined more closely as one between the idea of the infinite or unconditioned, conceived in terms of a

highest being or essence, and the various sensory, predominately natural forms which Hegel thinks human beings have unsuccessfully employed to express this idea

In Zoroastrianism, the idea of the infinite or unconditioned forms an immediate unity with that which serves as its sensory expression, namely, the natural phenomenon of light, because the latter is itself held to be 'the god, the divine being [*das göttliche Wesen*] in general'; so that there is, in effect, no separation between that which is meant (i.e. the infinite or unconditioned) and that which serves as its sign; and Zoroastrianism is not, therefore, of a truly symbolical character.³⁷ A distinction between the inner meaning and its sensory expression begins to occur in Indian religion, together with an attempt to overcome the division which thus arises; an attempt which, on account of the incommensurability of the content in relation to the sensory shapes which serve as its expression, must ultimately fail; in this particular case by deteriorating into the wildest fantasy.³⁸ A significant development occurs in Indian religion, however. This development concerns the way in which pure thought makes its appearance with the Hindu creator god Brahma, who, as master of the world, constitutes a universal power, an abstract One equivalent to the Jewish god Jehovah, even though, unlike the latter, this god has not been fully separated from that which is merely natural and sensory.³⁹ The separation of the spiritual content, which forms the inner meaning of the symbolic form of art, from the natural and sensory forms in which it is presented first properly occurs in Egyptian religion, which centres on the belief in the immortality of the soul; a belief which implies that spirit is independent of that which is merely natural and sensory.⁴⁰

Although Egyptian mythology is essentially symbolic because it is full of sensory forms that point beyond themselves to a meaning that is not to be found within these forms themselves and is essentially incommensurate with them, the inner meaning and the natural, sensory forms used to present this inner meaning become fully independent of each other only in Judaism and oriental pantheism; for we here have an absolute substance, in relation to which every finite entity is held to be a mere accident. Since in oriental pantheism this substance 'presents itself [*sich darstellt*]' in its accidents, which thus constitute its appearance, its relation to them is an affirmative one; whereas in Judaism, the infinite or unconditioned assumes the form of a ruler over everything finite, so that the latter is not only held to be accidental in relation to the absolute substance but is also reduced to the status of a means of glorifying God and demonstrating His absolute power.⁴¹ I now intend to show that it is this understanding of the relation of the absolute

substance to the finite which for Hegel makes Judaism into something more than simply one form of the sublime among others, hence his description of it as the classical and genuine form of sublimity. Judaism is the classical or genuine form of sublimity because it makes explicit the precise nature of the relation between content and sensory form which constitutes the essence of the symbolic form of art, and which leads the other examples of the latter to engage in an endless, ultimately futile striving after an absolute unity of content and form. In this respect, Judaism recognizes the limitations of all sensory forms when it comes to the type of content they are capable of presenting.

In Hegel's 1823 lectures on aesthetics, we find the claim that although historically certain ethical communities may not have reached the stage of forming abstract representations, this does not mean that such representations do not lie concealed in the various sensory images of which their mythologies are made up. As Hegel himself is recorded as having put it: 'Where the presentations [*Darstellungen*] are of such a kind that one sees they are symbolical, it can happen that the abstract thought is not yet itself known to spirit, but the figurative [*bildliche*] mode of presentation still proves to be the only way in which spirit can represent [*vorstellig machen*] its content'.⁴² This suggests that although the idea of the infinite or unconditioned, which forms the content of the symbolic form of art and the various oriental religions that exemplify it, may not have been one that human beings consciously sought to present in sensory form, this idea was nevertheless the true content of their mythologies and religions. Such an idea is also suggested by Hegel's account of Egyptian religion, in which he speaks of the drive towards art, a drive that he describes as the general instinct to give shape to that which is inner and to become conscious of the latter.⁴³ For this description of the drive in question as a matter of instinct rather than conscious activity implies that the Egyptians were not themselves fully aware of the inner meaning which they were attempting to express in sensory form. In the classical sublimity of Judaism, by contrast, the meaning has emerged as something of which people are conscious.⁴⁴

In this respect, Judaism is to be seen as a religion which involves a clearer and more distinct awareness of the fact that its content, which it shares in common with other oriental religions, is the infinite or unconditioned as it has been described above with reference to Kant's theory of the mathematical sublime. This further suggests that Judaism's complete separation of the spiritual content from the sensory form in which it is presented is possible because this content is known independently of that which can be intuited by means of the senses, so that the sensory as such turns out to be inessential

in relation to this content, a fact represented by Judaism's radical devaluation of the finite in its relation to God. In other words, the infinite or unconditioned becomes the object of consciousness in a way that no longer absolutely requires its being given sensory form, which is in any case a form to which this idea is not fully susceptible. In this way, Judaism recognizes that this content is essentially different in kind from that which is finite, thereby gaining insight into the incommensurability of the idea of the unconditioned in relation to all objects of sense experience, however boundless they may be. Consequently, although we find in holy scripture and sacred poetry (i.e. the Psalms) a host of sublime images, that is to say, images of God's greatness and glory, His unlimited power and the insignificance of all finite things in relation to His power,⁴⁵ the Jewish people were aware, or so Hegel claims, that these images could never adequately express the idea of the infinite or unconditioned which formed the true content of their religion. Moreover, Hegel himself shows that he thinks of the idea of the infinite or unconditioned as being the true content of Judaism when he claims that in sacred poetry, 'The art work is here the effusion of pure meaning, of essence [*des Wesens*] . . . the general representation itself, pure thought in general, thoughts of the highest being [*dem höchsten Wesen*]',⁴⁶ This historical religion can therefore be credited with having insight into the fact that, 'The indeterminate – God as the One – is not an object for art, to which instead belongs form [*Gestalt*], the means of sensory representation [*sinnlichen Vorstellens*] and intuition'.⁴⁷

By achieving this insight, Judaism demonstrates its superiority in relation to earlier religions, in the sense that it is aware of their inherent limitations with respect to the way in which they attempt to bring the object they all share to consciousness. Judaism then transcends the standpoint occupied by these religions, by adopting a purely conceptual idea of God as the unconditioned One, and the substance of reality. The other religions Hegel associates with the symbolic form of art, by contrast, involve a futile attempt to present in sensory form a content which simply does not lend itself to being expressed in the form of art (i.e. intuition); and the reason for this can be found in Kant's distinction between the mathematical and the aesthetic estimation of magnitude. For, as we have seen, in the mathematical estimation of magnitude the numerical series by means of which something is measured can be extended to infinity in accordance with a rule, whereas the aesthetic estimation of magnitude has its greatest basic measure in the form of the maximum number of representations that the judging subject can combine in a single intuition.⁴⁸ Yet the content of the symbolic form of art, that is to say, God as the unconditioned, indeterminate

One, demands that we attempt to transcend the spatial and temporal limits that determine the extent to which it is possible to combine such sensory items into a single whole; a task that cannot, however, ever be fully achieved.

In the light of all that has been said above, Hegel's account of the symbolic form of art appears to support the idea that for him the truth of the aesthetic realm is ultimately to be sought in something that transcends the latter, and that this truth consequently needs to be brought to consciousness by other, non-aesthetic means. The possibility of doing so is, moreover, suggested not only by the way in which Judaism's comprehension of the fact that the infinite or unconditioned does not lend itself to forming the object of a single intuition points to the emancipation of religion from an aesthetic means of bringing the divine to consciousness, but also by the way in which Spinoza's theory of substance, say, or Kant's account of the transcendental ideal, involve recognizing that this content can only be thought and that genuine knowledge of it consequently belongs to philosophy. Hegel himself appears to allude to such a possibility when he claims that the one and only object of philosophy is God, and describes this object as the unconditioned.⁴⁹ The unconditioned nature of this conception of God helps explain how the content of art, religion and philosophy might be the same. These three spheres of absolute spirit differ, however, with respect to the way in which they bring the object they all share to consciousness; for while the consciousness in question is a thinking one in the case of philosophy, and in religion it is a representational form of consciousness (*vorstellende Bewußtsein*), the relation of art to the 'idea' is one of intuition, since it involves a sensory knowledge of this content.⁵⁰ In other words, in art the content is present to consciousness in a way that allows it to be intuited through the senses, whereas religion represents the content in doctrines and teachings that are, as we shall see, part thought and part image, and philosophy thinks this same content in purely conceptual terms; and since philosophy involves a purely conceptual form of knowledge, it can be seen to correspond to the supersensible faculty of which we become aware, according to Kant, through experiencing a sense of the sublime. Hegel's use of the term 'idea' takes us beyond the symbolic form of art and the conception of the divine which it seeks to express, however, for reasons to be given in the next chapter.

Hegel's account of the symbolic form of art may be thought to suggest that his lectures on aesthetics ultimately need to be interpreted in terms of his logic and, it might also seem, in terms of a metaphysical Absolute. On the other hand, the way in which Hegel associates the symbolic form of art

with various oriental religions suggests that he is also attempting to understand art in terms of its role in the ethical life of a people.

For Hegel, the form of ethical life characteristic of the epoch of human history that he refers to as the oriental world is for the most part a condition in which freedom is lacking; a patriarchal form of society that has not advanced beyond the natural form of ethical life, that is to say, the institution of the family, so that in this type of society the latter forms the most basic and significant form of social organization. Moreover, just as the symbolic form of art seeks to express its content in natural forms, so that 'external nature is immediately divine or an adornment of the god', the only social distinctions that arise in the oriental world are natural ones, namely, those of being born the member of a certain caste.⁵¹ Although Judaism radically devalues the finite and sensory because it holds God to be an entirely supersensible being, and to this extent emancipates itself from nature, Hegel does not think that this is by itself enough to make Judaism into a truly ethical religion. In his lectures on aesthetics, we in fact find in connection with its sacred poetry the claim that the relation of human beings to God is one of fear and obedience.⁵² This view of Judaism as a religion based on fear and a slavish obedience to an invisible, transcendent God implies that human beings cannot be held to stand in a relation of freedom to the ethical norms that determine their actions, so that even in Judaism the transition to the realm of freedom is not properly made, despite its radical break with nature.

This does not mean, however, that Hegel views the aesthetic works that he associates with the symbolic form of art and the oriental religions that exemplify it as having no ethical significance whatsoever. These works can, after all, be thought to play a role in unifying the ethical communities in which they arise. Hegel himself alludes to such a role in his discussion of architecture, which he considers to be the art form that is most characteristic of the symbolic form of art, when he describes the building of the Tower of Babel as an immense work of sculpture that human beings constructed together, with this common enterprise leading the various peoples to unite to form a state and in this way escape a purely patriarchal condition. He thus views this work of art, or, rather, myth, as having constituted a bond that linked people together in the same way as laws serve to link modern individuals together.⁵³ This unifying function which Hegel thinks art or myth is capable of performing becomes even more apparent when we turn to his account of what he considers to be a more truly ethical condition, namely, the Greek world, in which, he argues, art had a vital role to play in communicating ideas that served to orient people's actions in such a way as to bring

about and sustain the ethical world of which they were members. By outlining the role that Hegel thus assigns to art in the next chapter, and by then looking at his account of the transition from the classical Greek religion of art to the revealed religion of Christianity and the romantic form of art, I show that it is in relation to Hegel's philosophy of objective spirit, that is to say, his philosophies of right and history, that we need to understand his lectures on aesthetics. This brings me to Hegel's account of the classical form of art, and to his reasons for regarding ancient Greek art as the paradigmatic form of art, which can be best brought out, I believe, with reference to his views on the original (i.e. Homeric) epic.

Chapter 2

The Classical Form of Art

1. The Original Epic

For Hegel, the original epic, of which the Homeric epic is the high point, forms the foundation of a people's consciousness, and thus belongs among the *monumenta nationum*, in which the world of a whole people finds expression.¹ The original epic thus represents a vital stage in the development of the collective consciousness of a people; and Hegel accordingly describes it as belonging to a time when a people goes from the stage of having an indistinct form of consciousness to the stage at which spirit feels itself capable of producing its own world, in which it still knows itself to be at home.² This invites the question as to how we are to understand this transition from an indistinct form of consciousness to one in which a people knows itself, together with the question as to the precise nature of the role played by the epic in bringing about this change in consciousness. The answers given to these questions will reveal the original epic's function of presenting not only purely religious ideas, but also ethical ones that serve to orient people's actions. In this way, it represents a prime example of a work of art that in Hegel's view fulfils its highest vocation.

Although Hegel points out that centuries separate Homer from the events which he portrays,³ so that the epic poem is later than the life and spirit which it portrays, he holds that there is a close connection between the spirit of the poet and the spirit of the world which he brings forth (i.e. the heroic world portrayed in the epic poem) in the case of the original epic.⁴ In short, the mythical world that Homer portrays in some sense corresponds to the world to which the epic poet himself belongs. I now intend to show that for Hegel what links these two worlds is the fact that the world portrayed in the original epic reveals the essence of the actual world of which Homer was himself a part, and which he helped shape through his art.

The idea that Hegel thought of Homer as helping shape the Greek world of which he was himself a member through his art is suggested by the fact

that in all the lecture series he is recorded as citing approvingly Herodotus's claim that Homer and Hesiod gave the Greeks their gods, or made them, as it is also expressed.⁵ This is not to say, however, that Homer and Hesiod created the gods *ex nihilo*, as it were. The relation of the Greek artist to the content of the work of art can in fact be understood as a twofold one. On the one hand, there are certain traditional elements, which derive from a commonly held conception of the gods and a common understanding of the past, and, on the other hand, there is an element of innovation, with the artist offering his own interpretation of the traditional elements by means of his arrangement and portrayal of them in the work of art. Hegel suggests, moreover, that the traditional elements must belong to a living tradition if there is going to be an essential connection between the world that the epic poet portrays and the world of which he is himself a member. This is shown by his scepticism concerning the attempt made by the eighteenth-century German poet Friedrich Gottlob Klopstock to provide Germany with its own Christian epic. Hegel remarks that here there is, on the one hand, the story of the life of Jesus, and, on the other hand, German culture of the eighteenth century, with the result that the understanding of the content belongs to a different age from the content itself; and it is this separation of the content of the epic poem from its cultural conditions that for Hegel also distinguishes Virgil, who employs mythology in a purely mechanical way, from Homer.⁶ We must therefore assume that in the case of the original epic the level of culture found in the world that the epic poet portrays in some sense corresponds to that of the age in which he lives.

The original epic is in this respect to be understood as having reference to a pre-existing world which provides the content of the epic poem, a world to which the epic poet himself belongs. However, through his portrayal of this pre-existing world in the epic poem, the poet to some extent transforms this world by providing it with a more determinate shape and by depriving it of any inessential features, thus revealing its essence. The Greek artist or poet can therefore be said to have created the gods and other figures of Greek mythology by having first given them a more definite form, even though he cannot be thought to have personally created these gods and mythological figures, since his activity is determined by certain ideas already present in the Greek mind concerning the nature of the gods and the heroes of mythology. This accords with the claim that while tradition provided the ingredients of the representations of the gods, it did not as yet contain any determinate shapes or forms (*Gestalten*), for these shapes or forms were instead the products of the spiritual consciousness of the poets Homer and Hesiod.⁷ In the Greek world art served, in short, both to clarify

and to shape a pre-existing mythology, turning what was inchoate into something with a more abiding and determinate form.

This essential connection between the world portrayed in the epic poem and the living traditions out of which it arises explains how the original epic makes possible the transition from the stage of an indistinct form of consciousness on the part of a whole people to a higher stage of consciousness, which involves a form of self-knowledge, without its representing a radical break with the world out of which it arises. For the transition in question can be identified with a process of clarification with respect to a people's conception of what constitutes its own historical essence, that is to say, the set of essential relations governing its world; and it is this process of clarification which constitutes the original epic's historical function. Thus, what is meant by this process of clarification is that prior to its objectification in various works of art, the Greek people's conception of the divine and the ethical may be thought to have lacked determinacy, so that it fell to the Greek artist to give concrete expression to a commonly held, but inchoate, understanding of the world. In the case of the idea of the divine, this would be in line with the explanation of the claim that Homer and Hesiod gave the Greeks their gods given in the 1820/21 lectures that they turned the unclear representations (*Vorstellungen*) of the people as a whole into a more determinate form of consciousness.⁸ It would also be in line with Herodotus's claim that Hesiod and Homer provided the gods with names, offered an account of their descent and described their outward forms,⁹ rather than having made the gods in the sense of having invented them. In other words, these poets helped shape the Greek people's conception of its gods in the sense that although the Greeks may have already conceived of their gods in anthropomorphic terms prior to any artistic portrayal of them as individual gods, the Greek work of art nevertheless made it easier for the Greek people to identify the various gods and distinguish them from one another, to become clearer about their significance and the extent of their powers in relation both to each other and to human beings, and to be better able to visualize them and relate to them as objects of worship.

Hegel uses the Greeks' anthropomorphic conception of their gods to explain the transition from the symbolic form of art to the classical form of art; and it can therefore also be seen to explain the transition from the aesthetic category of the sublime, which characterizes the symbolic form of art, to the aesthetic category of beauty, which for Hegel characterizes classical Greek art. In the latter case, it is significant that the Greeks conceived of the divine in terms of a set of individual gods with human attributes, rather than in terms of an abstract One or substance, as in Judaism, because the

human form is a natural one that can easily become the object of a single intuition. We therefore have a religious content that can be adequately presented in the form of art, and we thus encounter the claim that in classical Greek art, 'These gods or ideals are creations that arise out of spirit. On the one hand, the human form [*Gestalt*] is essential to the shape they are given [*ihrer Gestaltung*]; it is a matter of deep insight to recognize the necessity of the form's having only this shape, the human [form] is the appropriate form'.¹⁰ The insight in question is for Hegel itself the result of a process, which in the section on the classical form of art found in his various lecture series on aesthetics he describes as the way in which the natural forms that various oriental religions employed to present their conceptions of the divine were gradually transformed by the Greeks until the divine became specifically associated with the human form, in which the spiritual and the natural are unified, with the former being more dominant than the latter. The ancient Greek conception of the divine thus provides an example of what is meant by the idea of a content that is no longer natural in 'the bad sense', but is instead something natural that has been made ideal (*ein Idealisirtes*) through its being determined by spirit.¹¹ Moreover, the coincidence of the natural form with that which it presents (i.e. the idea of the divine) means that the representation of the divine is no longer a symbolic one. The Greeks are therefore seen as having developed a conception of the divine that constitutes a suitable content for art, in so far as the latter is to fulfil its highest vocation of bringing the divine to consciousness. If we consider this development in relation to Hegel's views on Judaism, we have, on the one hand, the emancipation of religion from art in the classical sublimity of Judaism, and, on the other hand, the humanization of both art, with respect to its content, and the divine in the Greek religion of art.

As long as one concentrates on the theological content of classical Greek art, it may seem that sculpture represents a better example of the paradigmatic nature of the classical form of art than the original epic. Yet in my view this results in a failure to do full justice to the ethical dimension of Hegel's conception of the classical form of art, whereas the same cannot be said of his account of the original epic, which also includes the theological aspect. Hegel points to the ethical implications of Homer's works when he remarks that for the Greeks Homer was their Bible, out of which they developed all morality.¹² We may therefore think of Hegel as understanding the Greek artist to be someone who influenced not only the way in which people understood the divine and their relation to it, but also the ways in which they acted. For by giving certain commonly held ideas concerning the behaviour of the gods and their relation to human beings, and the nature and value

of the actions of the heroes of Greek mythology, a more determinate and abiding form in the epic poem, the epic poet also provided the Greeks with a set of ethical norms, in the shape of his portrayal of actions that could be considered to be pious or impious, something worthy of emulation or something base. In short, the epic poem's portrayal of the gods and the heroes of Greek mythology helped reinforce and perpetuate certain commonly held ideas concerning what constitutes a noble or base, a devout or sacrilegious, action or deed. The epic poet can consequently be thought to have helped create the ethical world of which he was himself a member through his art. Hegel's view of the original epic as a work of art that helped shape and perpetuate the religious beliefs and ethical norms governing the ethical life of ancient Greece suggests that he thinks that art once functioned as a vital source of the beliefs and norms orienting the actions of all the members of this historical community.

The way in which the work of art both clarifies and shapes a pre-existing conception of the divine and the ethical in ancient Greek society implies that the original epic cannot be understood in isolation from the common religious and ethical consciousness out of which it emerges, and, conversely, that this religious and ethical consciousness cannot itself be understood in isolation from the epic poem which brings the divine and ethical to human consciousness. This reciprocal relation between the original epic and the common religious and ethical consciousness out of which it emerges makes it easier for us to understand why Hegel would have spoken of the epic as the world of a people in its totality.¹³ For the original epic can be seen to express in an objective form the essential (i.e. ethical and religious) relations governing the historical community out of which it arises, so that the totality in question is to be identified with the whole set of these relations. If the epic poem is to express this totality, it must, however, restrict itself to presenting these relations in a way that does not introduce any inessential features that might obscure them; and part of the artist's greatness will depend on his ability to do this. In this respect, it is not the individuality of the artist but 'the intuition of a nation' that presents itself in an objective manner,¹⁴ with the intuition in question being that of a nation's intuition of its own historical essence, that is, the set of essential ethical and religious relations governing its world.

What Hegel has to say of the work of art in general is therefore especially true of the original epic: it is a way and means of bringing before man what he himself is, thus satisfying his need to have what he is in general as the object of his consciousness.¹⁵ The original epic in this way makes possible a more reflective attitude towards the beliefs and attitudes governing that

which Hegel calls ethical life (*Sittlichkeit*); for it allows a people to intuit the totality which constitutes its own historical essence. In other words, whereas in everyday life the religious ideas and ethical norms governing society guide the individual's thoughts and actions without this individual necessarily being conscious of them and their role in determining his actions, and without his comprehending them as being essentially interconnected, the original epic provides the means whereby a contemplative attitude may be gained in relation to this set of interconnected ideas and norms. In this way, the original epic makes possible a kind of collective self-consciousness on the part of the historical community of which it is the expression; and it is this clarification of its own essence which leads Hegel to associate the original epic with the transition in a nation's history from an indistinct form of consciousness to one in which it gains self-knowledge. It must be pointed out, however, that this reflective relation is not to be understood as amounting to a critically reflective attitude, for Hegel does not think that such critical reflection was typical of the ethical life of ancient Greece. He claims, for example, that the ancient Greek had no conscience because justice and duty were defined by the state, and no reflection occurred with regard to the question as to whether what was defined in this way was really just and a duty.¹⁶ This explains why the Greeks were content to act in accordance with norms that had their ultimate source in myth. In short, the validity of the mythic source of these norms was not called into question, because the demand for reasons as to why one should act in accordance with the norms and values governing society had yet to arise. Such critical reflection is, for Hegel, to be found in the modern world as shaped by the Christian religion, however. Indeed, the connection between the Christian religion and a more reflective form of consciousness than the one found in the ethical life of ancient Greece receives a mention in his lectures on aesthetics:

In the Christian religion are many categories that belong to only this condition; morality as such, reflection upon that which one wills under the form of the good. Here belong the pangs of conscience that do not suit events belonging to an earlier condition; Orestes, for example, suffered no pangs of conscience. The Eumenides are alien beings that are external to him; pangs of conscience [are] by contrast internal, immanent [to] us.¹⁷

This difference in the levels of reflection found in the ethical life of ancient Greece, on the one hand, and the modern world as shaped by the Christian religion, with its greater inwardness, on the other, will be seen to play an important role in Hegel's reflections on the significance of art in the

modern world. In order to understand Hegel's views on this matter, and his account of the transition from a religion of art to a religion that has become independent of art, we first need to look more closely at what he means by the beautiful work of art, or the ideal, as he otherwise calls it.

2. The Ideal

In his lectures on aesthetics, Hegel speaks of the 'idea' of the beautiful because that which is beautiful (*das Schöne*) is, for him, the Idea in a determinate form, while the Idea itself is 'the concept, the reality of the concept and the unity of the concept and its reality'.¹⁸ This description of the Idea accords with Hegel's account of it in his works on logic, in which he describes it as the absolute unity of the concept and objectivity.¹⁹ Although this description of what is beautiful, together with Hegel's claim that the purpose and vocation of art is to present the Idea,²⁰ show that he in some sense held his conception of the ideal or beautiful work of art to have its basis in his logic, the absolute unity of the concept and objectivity exhibited by the ideal can to a large extent be explained independently of Hegel's logic. This means that we can resist taking the further step of explaining the ideal in terms of a metaphysical or conceptual structure that is held to underlie reality in general; an explanation which would in any case fail to do justice to the ethical significance that Hegel thinks is evident in certain works of art.

As far as the two moments of the Idea are concerned, that is, the concept and reality or objectivity, the first of these moments, the concept, is itself spoken of as an absolute unity of different determinations.²¹ What this means is that the concept contains a set of necessary and interrelated moments, which Hegel identifies as universality, particularity and individuality (or singularity), with the moment of individuality consisting of the unity of the two previous moments.²² Since Hegel thinks that the unity of the concept and objectivity which characterizes the Idea manifests itself to varying degrees in different objects, including the beautiful work of art, we are confronted with the question concerning the precise way in which the various moments of the concept are present in the beautiful work of art, so that the latter can be understood as the Idea in a determinate form. In my view, the key to understanding why Hegel thinks of the beautiful work of art as an example of the Idea in a determinate form is provided by the fact that such sensory elements as linguistic signs, sounds, colours and tones are essential features of the work of art. Hegel describes space and time as being the general forms of the sensory as such, so that it is through these forms of

intuition that everything that is sensory is sensory.²³ This identification of the essence of the sensory as such with presence in space and time allows us to associate the sensory aspect of the work of art with the second moment of the concept, which Hegel terms particularity, and also to identify that which constitutes the moment of universality, which is the first moment of the concept.

We can associate the moment of particularity with the sensory aspect of the work of art because Hegel describes the object of sense-certainty in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* as a 'pure this' located at a specific point in space and time.²⁴ The object of sense-certainty is here thought to be something particular on account of the way in which it remains independent of other particular sensory items in virtue of the different points in space and time that it occupies. Hegel argues, however, that the terms used to refer to such sensory objects are universal ones. For example, the terms 'here' and 'now' used by sense-certainty to pick out its object from among other objects dispersed in space and time equally apply to other objects located in space and time as well as to the particular object to which sense-certainty intends to refer through its use of such terms. Hegel takes this to mean that it is impossible for us to pick out a pure sensory element which has not been conceptualized in some way, though this is not to say that such elements, standing in isolation from each other in virtue of the different points in space and time that they occupy, do not exist. Indeed, Hegel's account of the sensory consciousness in the *Encyclopaedia* implies the existence of such elements; for he states that the temporal and spatially determined individuality of the 'here' and the 'now' belongs to intuition.²⁵ Since the sensory material out of which the work of art is formed can be characterized by the particularity of its elements, that is to say, their location at different points in space and time, the sensory aspect of the work of art can be identified with the moment of particularity. Moreover, the alleged impossibility of referring to a particular sensory object without employing universal terms implies that there is an organizing principle at work which unifies the sensory particulars; and we therefore need to ask what acts as the universal or organizing principle that unifies discrete sensory elements into a meaningful whole in the case of the beautiful work of art. This transformation of the sensory elements into a meaningful whole appears for Hegel to be an essential feature of the ideal, since he is reported as identifying the latter with the following demand: 'to now gather together the manifold into a single expression (so that there is still a being outside each other [*Außereinandersein*], in which, however, each part shows the whole to be gathered into one, or so that the whole presents itself [*sich darstellt*] as having a soul)'.²⁶ We have already encountered a similar demand in Chapter 1, where we saw that

Kant's idea of the maximum number of representations that the judging subject is able to combine in a single intuition corresponded to Hegel's understanding of measure in so far as it relates specifically to the conditions of intuition, which involve a set of temporal and spatial relations that determine the extent to which representations can be successfully combined to form a single intuition.

Since the work of art is a product of human activity, whether it be of an instinctive kind, as with some of the oriental religions that Hegel associates with the symbolic form of art, or of a more conscious kind, it makes sense, I believe, to identify the organizing principle that unifies the discrete sensory elements, which form the raw material of art, with the conception of the work that is to be produced through the artist's formative activity; a conception that will involve certain thoughts in accordance with which the sensory elements of the work of art are transformed into a meaningful whole. This would be in line with Hegel's view of the symbolic and classical forms of art as attempting to present a particular conception of the divine. It would also accord with the way in which he sees the original epic as communicating ethical as well as purely religious ideas. Hegel can therefore be seen to associate the organizing principle that unifies the manifold sensory elements into a coherent whole with thought and, in particular, with the content which is to be portrayed in the work of art, whereas he identifies the sensory aspect of the latter with its form.²⁷ Consequently, the content of the work of art can be identified with the moment of universality on the grounds that this content, as belonging to the realm of thought, will ultimately involve concepts that are universal in kind, just as sense-certainty cannot help employing universal terms in its attempt to refer to particular sensory items. On this model, the beautiful work of art would be one in which the universal (i.e. the conceptual content) and the particular (i.e. the sensory elements) are in perfect harmony with each other, thereby exhibiting the unity of the concept and objectivity which for Hegel constitutes the essential nature of the Idea. Thus, in the case of the ideal, the moment of individuality, as the unity of universality and particularity, can be identified with this absolute unity of content and form, so that although the demand for an absolute unity of content and form appears to stem from Hegel's account of the Idea in his logic, we might bracket out such claims and view Hegel as simply making the point that an absolute unity of content and form is possible only when that which is to be portrayed (i.e. the content) is by its very nature susceptible to the form of art.²⁸ The content of the work of art must, in short, be of such a kind that it lends itself to being portrayed in sensory form, as is the case with classical Greek art, in which the

divine is presented in human form. As integral as this idea is to Hegel's aesthetics, it is, in my view, simply too general, however, as I intend to show in Chapter 4, where it will be seen how easily works of art other than those of classical Greece can be thought to satisfy this condition. Yet it is hard to see how this defect could be remedied by taking the further step of relating Hegel's theory of the ideal to his logic.

In the context of his account of the classical form of art, the idea that the content of the work of art must be of such a kind that it lends itself to being portrayed in sensory form might be thought to be a condition that classical Greek sculpture most fully meets, since here an anthropomorphic conception of the divine is adequately presented by means of the human form. This is something that Hegel himself suggests when he describes classical Greek sculpture as resting within itself, that is to say, remaining self-contained on account of the absolute unity of content and form it exhibits, a unity that means it does not require anything external to itself in order for it to be complete.²⁹ Yet the rather metaphorical language that Hegel tends to use in such cases fails to capture the ethical significance that he himself accords to classical Greek art, as in his analysis of the original epic. In addition to the condition that the ideal is to exhibit a unity of content and form through its content being eminently suitable for presentation by aesthetic means, Hegel's theory of the ideal consequently needs to be understood as also involving the ethically significant features that he attributes to it, that is to say, those features which make the work of art integral to the ethical life of the people out of which it emerges. On the basis of Hegel's account of the original epic, these features can be identified as the following ones.

To begin with, the original epic is the primary means of clarifying and sustaining a common ethical and religious understanding of the world, one that concerns the totality of essential relations governing the thoughts and orienting the actions of a whole historical community. Secondly, since it communicates a common ethical and religious understanding of the world, as opposed to one that pertains only to particular individuals or groups within society, the original epic has a universal character. Thirdly, the epic poet must be thought to stand in a necessary relation to that which he portrays, since the epic poem expresses the set of essential relations governing the thoughts and actions of the poet himself as well as the other members of the ethical world to which he belongs, and of which the original epic is the highest expression. Finally, the original epic can be seen to belong firmly to the realm of freedom rather than the realm of nature, despite its use of natural forms, particularly the human body. For as both the product of a people's

own collective consciousness, as given a determinate and more abiding form by means of the epic poet's activity, and the source of this people's ethical norms, the original epic represents a form of self-legislation on the part of the Greeks, in the sense that the ethical laws to which they are subject can be thought to be the work of their own mythic consciousness as mediated by the artistic activity of the epic poet. In this respect, the original epic provides an example of Hegel's vision of Greek ethical life in general as one in which self-consciousness produces the unity of itself and the ethical substance as its own work.³⁰ These features of the original epic arguably make it, rather than sculpture, into the prime example of art in so far as it fulfils its highest vocation. The ethical significance of the original epic can also be brought out by comparing it to Hegel's account of Greek tragedy, which he clearly regards as an ethically significant art form within the ancient Greek form of ethical life. This relates to a function that the original epic performs; one whose performance Greek tragedy presupposes.

Hegel claims that the ethical forms the theme and foundation of classical tragedy, and he speaks of the ethical as here being the divine in so far as it is willed and forms the basis of human action.³¹ In ancient tragedy, the ethical presents itself as divided, however. Hegel thinks that the highest expression of the kind of opposition between the ethical powers that results from such a division within the ethical substance is to be found in Sophocles's tragedy *Antigone*, in which the ethical substance divides itself into the family and the state, with Antigone seeking to demonstrate the absolute validity of the rights of the former and Creon seeking to demonstrate the absolute validity of the latter.³² Although ethical life consists in the harmony of these ethical powers, the individual agents involved in the tragic collision identify themselves completely with one ethical power in opposition to the other one, and in so doing have equal justification in relation to each other.³³ Hegel consequently identifies the idea of *pathos* with the way in which the 'substantial powers' of ethical life only become something actual through the agency of individuals, who seek to demonstrate the absolute authority of these powers.³⁴ We need to look beyond the lectures on aesthetics themselves, however, to gain a clearer idea of the ways in which the various points identified above relate to Hegel's views on the ethical life of ancient Greece; and I accordingly now turn to Hegel's account of Greek ethical life in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, which makes use of Sophocles's play *Antigone*.

In Hegel's account of Greek ethical life in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, the conflict between Antigone, daughter of Oedipus, the former ruler of Thebes, and her uncle, Creon, the present ruler of the city, occasioned by

Antigone's disobeying Creon's edict not to bury her dead brother, Polyneices, who has died attacking the city in an attempt to seize power, is generalized to become a conflict between the divine law and the human law, with the former being identified with the female and the latter with the male family member. The claim found in Hegel's lectures on aesthetics that Antigone has 'a worthy reason for acting, and Creon's command is likewise justified, in so far as the brother came as an enemy of his native land and sought to destroy it',³⁵ implies that Hegel thinks that both parties to the conflict make claims that are legitimate ones within the ethical world of the *polis*.³⁶ I now intend to show how this claim relates to the interdependence of the divine law and the human law that for Hegel characterizes the ethical life of ancient Greece.

In the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel refers on a number of occasions to the interdependence that characterizes the relation of the divine law to the human law in ancient Greek ethical life. He claims, for example, that the law which is manifest to each ethical consciousness is essentially tied to its opposite, so that the essence of these laws is their unity, even though the ethical consciousness in each case carries out one law in opposition to the other law.³⁷ Each ethical power, as actualized through the actions of the parties to the conflict, is therefore said to have no advantage over the other one that would make it into a more essential moment of the ethical substance.³⁸ This interdependence of the divine law and the human law can be explained in the following way.

One of the main functions performed by the family in ancient Greek ethical life is one that it shares in common with the modern family, namely, the upbringing of children. However, unlike the modern family, the ancient Greek family has a more particular function in relation to the upbringing of male children, which is to make the latter fit to enter political life, in which the end of the male family member's activity becomes the community as a whole (*das Gemeinwesen*), in whose service he must act to prove that he is virtuous.³⁹ The community as a whole is, moreover, the power over all the individual aspects of ancient Greek ethical life, including the various families of which it is made up. For through its laws and the government which directs its activity, the community prevents any single aspect (e.g. any particular family) from isolating itself from the social whole and acting contrary to the common interest; so that in this respect the human law appears to have priority over the divine law, which Hegel associates with the family.⁴⁰ On the other hand, the family performs another essential function within ancient Greek ethical life, namely, the role of performing the burial rites that tradition prescribes in the event of the death of one of its members.

This function takes on a special significance in the case of a male family member who has died performing the highest duty that he has as a citizen, which is to risk his life defending the community against other communities. For by performing the prescribed funeral rites, the sister, to whom this task is entrusted, acts in accordance with the commands of the gods, thereby appeasing the chthonic powers that are believed to lend the community strength in its struggles against other communities. In this way, the activity of the female family member (i.e. the sister) and the male family member (i.e. the brother) ultimately turn out to have the same object, which is the preservation of the community as a whole. This suggests that the unity of Greek ethical life depends on the harmony of the human law and the divine law.

The fact that in tragedy one party identifies him- or herself absolutely with one ethical power in opposition to the other one, means that it presents certain tensions inherent in Greek ethical life, and in this respect ancient tragedy belongs to a stage that lies between the unifying process that Hegel associates with the original epic, whereby a collective national identity and ethical consciousness is forged, and the gradual dissolution of the ethical community formed in this way. The original epic must be consequently thought to perform a distinctive function that first makes the art form of tragedy possible, namely, that of providing the substantial basis on which the opposition between the ethical powers, or, rather, their representatives, is able to develop; and this is why Hegel speaks of drama (i.e. ancient tragedy) as having the epic as its presupposition.⁴¹ The dissolution of the unity of ancient Greek ethical life finds expression in comedy, especially Aristophanes's comedies, in which the gods themselves together with the Athenian democracy become objects of derision, and the nullity of that which is no longer valid but wants to count as such is exposed.⁴² Epic poetry, tragedy and ancient comedy can therefore all be seen to be rooted in the ethical life of ancient Greece, though in different ways according to the stage of this form of ethical life which they reflect, so that in each case the poet can be thought to stand in a necessary relation to that which he portrays, with his art expressing something essential about the set of ethical relations governing the society of which he is himself a member.

Hegel's account of the classical form of art raises the question as to whether works of art can exhibit the features mentioned above under different cultural and historical conditions to those found in the ethical life of ancient Greece, and we shall later see that Hegel is generally highly sceptical regarding such a possibility on account of the different conditions that he thinks characterize the modern world. Hegel's account of the role played

by art in the Greek world provides us with a way of understanding how art might be thought to have once had universal validity in a given historical community, as opposed to its being of interest only to certain individuals or groups within society. Art has, moreover, been accorded such significance in relation to later forms of ethical life. F. W. J. Schelling, for example, can be seen to use Dante's *Divine Comedy* as the model for a work of art that is of universal significance on account of its mythological content, which, for Schelling, is the highest and unsurpassable form of mythology found in the Christian representation of God. The artist is here held to combine the culture and history of his own age into a poetic whole by means of an act that is analogous to God's act of creating the world, so that art is accorded the social role of guaranteeing a world view and the community which constitutes its realization.⁴³ For Hegel, by contrast, the kind of reciprocal relation that exists between the classical Greek work of art and the common ethical and religious consciousness out of which it arises is largely absent in the Christian world, which emerges in the wake of the dissolution of the ancient world. The reason he gives for the weakening of the relation between art and religion is that the revealed religion of Christianity can and must bring the divine to consciousness independently of art, because its conception of the divine is one that can no longer be adequately portrayed in the form of intuition. This new conception of the divine is, as regards its mode of expression, held by Hegel to be closer to the purely conceptual form of knowledge that characterizes philosophy than art is.

Thus, while in the 1807 *Phenomenology of Spirit*, which was to serve as the introduction to his philosophical system, Hegel includes what he would later come to call the symbolic and classical forms of art in his account of religion, in the later *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences*, which was first published in 1817, he treats art and religion as separate moments of the third and ultimate section of the 'philosophy of spirit' entitled 'absolute spirit'. This separation of art from religion is then reflected in the separate lecture series that Hegel gave in Berlin on the philosophies of art and religion. Although this suggests that Hegel came to view art and religion as two independent spheres of human thought and activity, we have seen that both the symbolic and classical forms of art remain inextricably linked with religion in his lectures on aesthetics. In his 1826 lectures on this subject, Hegel continues to maintain, in fact, that religion is a religion of art (*Religion der Kunst*) before it is one of spirit.⁴⁴ Moreover, just as Hegel's account of the Greek religion of art (*Kunst-Religion*) in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* is followed by an account of the revealed religion of Christianity, the section on art in the *Encyclopaedia* is followed by an account of the revealed religion.

The transition from art to religion in Hegel's philosophical system is therefore not to be understood as the transition from a form of art which is independent of religion to a religion that is independent of art; it is instead to be understood as the transition from a form of religion which is essentially related to art to a form of religion which has emancipated itself from art. This independence of religion in relation to art leads Hegel to interpose a form of art, the romantic form of art, between the Greek religion of art and the revealed religion.⁴⁵

In the next chapter I argue, however, that the transcripts of Hegel's lectures on aesthetics, when read in conjunction with some of the views expressed in his lectures on the philosophy of religion concerning the Christian religion, especially the limitations of its form of knowledge, contain grounds for doubting that Hegel sufficiently explains why the romantic form of art must be thought to lack the potential to present the conception of the divine which enters the world with the Christian religion. This will be seen to have some important implications in relation to the structure of Hegel's theory of absolute spirit, since this structure begins to look problematic once the idea that the transition from a religion of art to a religion that has emancipated itself from art, in the sense of no longer having to bring its content to consciousness by aesthetic means, can no longer be viewed as a necessary one. Moreover, beyond such systematic issues, the implications of this failure to explain the necessity of the transition from art to religion will enable me to provide further reasons as to why Hegel's lectures on aesthetics should be understood in terms of his theory of objective spirit. We first need, however, to turn to Hegel's account of the transition from the Greek religion of art to the revealed religion of Christianity, and his understanding of the new conception of the divine which enters the world with the Christian religion.

Chapter 3

The Transition to the Revealed Religion and the Romantic Form of Art

1. The Revealed Religion

The doctrine which for Hegel expresses the essence of the Christian conception of the divine is the doctrine of the Trinity. I shall therefore now turn to the interpretation that he gives of this doctrine in the *Encyclopaedia* and the earlier *Phenomenology of Spirit*, which already contains in a more condensed form the interpretation of Christianity found in the later Berlin lectures on the philosophy of religion.¹

In the *Encyclopaedia*, Hegel associates the first person of the Trinity, the person of the Father, ‘creator of heaven and earth’, with the ‘the sphere of pure thought or the abstract element of essence [*des Wesens*]’.² As an abstract essence, the person of the Father can be identified with the Jewish conception of the divine that we encountered in Hegel’s account of the symbolic form of art. Yet Hegel opposes the Christian conception of God, in virtue of its greater determinacy, to this abstract conception of the divine in the following passage from his lectures on aesthetics:

God is not however this abstraction of empty essentiality, not the abstraction of the irrational understanding. God in his truth is internally concrete; God is person, is subject and, grasped in his determinacy as person, spirit, in himself triune, internally determinate and the unity of this determinateness.³

The determinacy of the Christian conception of the divine is held to lie in the way in which the other persons of the Trinity, the Son and the Holy Spirit, also form essential moments of it. Hegel accordingly claims in connection with the transition from the first to the second person of the Trinity that the ‘absolute Being [*absolute Wesen*] which exists as an actual self-consciousness

seems to have come down from its eternal simplicity, but by thus *coming down* it has in fact attained for the first time to its own highest essence [*höchstes Wesen*].⁴ For although God may appear to have become less God-like by becoming an actual self-consciousness, he realizes himself as God in the Incarnation because determinacy forms part of the essence of God. The way in which God assumes a human form in the Incarnation might be thought to correspond to the ancient Greek conception of the divine. Yet the transition from an abstract God to one with a human form in the Incarnation is held to be of an even more radical nature by Hegel, who claims that the Greek god is not human enough,⁵ and that the anthropomorphism of the Christian conception of the divine is more extreme than the one found in the classical form of art.⁶ Hegel can here be seen to have in mind the idea that Jesus becomes subject to the conditions of finitude to the point of being born and of dying at the hands of other human beings, whereas the Greek gods were held to be immortal and to inhabit a region above and beyond the sphere within which mortals acted, so that they did not themselves completely enter the realm of finitude.

As a specific individual (i.e. Jesus of Nazareth), the person of the Son is described by Hegel as an 'exclusive One', so that 'Spirit as an individual Self is not yet equally the universal Self, the Self of everyone'.⁷ The thought here is that Christ, as an individual person, appears to human consciousness as one particular among others, standing in an external relation to the universal, which is here the social subject spirit that Hegel describes as 'the unity of the different independent self-consciousnesses which, in their opposition, enjoy perfect freedom and independence: "I" that is "We" and "We" that is "I"'.⁸ Unlike the isolated individual person of Christ, spirit represents an absolute unity of the particular and universal because the individual stands in an essential relation to the other individuals who form part of this social subject. The merely external relation that appears to exist between the person of the Son and the social subject spirit means that the absolute unity of the universal and the particular, which Hegel terms individuality, has yet to be fully revealed to humankind. The defect in question is remedied by the representation of the death of Christ and the subsequent presence of the Holy Spirit in the 'universal self-consciousness of the community'.⁹ In other words, Hegel thinks that the Holy Spirit represents the overcoming of the moment of particularity and the return to universality, though this time the universal in question is a concrete one that contains the particular within itself, because although Christ dies as a particular individual, he is still present *within* the universal (i.e. the community) in the shape of the Holy Spirit.

I have here given only an extremely sketchy account of Hegel's interpretation of the doctrine of the Trinity because the key point is not so much the interpretation itself but how it relates to his lectures on aesthetics. It is already sufficiently clear that Hegel thinks that the doctrine of the Trinity can be interpreted in terms of the moments of the logical concept. This in turn allows him to maintain the identity of the content of art, religion and philosophy, though, as I have already pointed out, to insist on this point comes at the price of regarding the ideal largely in abstraction from the various features that for Hegel constitute its ethical significance. The question now arises as to why Hegel considers the revealed religion to offer a more perspicuous representation of this conceptual structure of reality than art is able to do; and in order to understand what makes religion in this respect superior to art, we need to look at the form in which the revealed religion brings its content to consciousness.

Since the relation of philosophy to other forms of knowledge can be characterized as its capacity to comprehend in purely conceptual terms that which these other forms of knowledge fail completely to free of sensory features, we must assume that the superiority of the revealed religion in relation to art rests on the fact that its form, which Hegel terms representational thought (*Vorstellung*), is closer to this purely conceptual mode of thought than is intuition, which is the form of art. However, as we shall see below, religious representational thought also does not fully succeed in freeing its content of sensory features, even though the superiority of the revealed religion in relation to art is held by Hegel to consist in the greater extent to which it is able to do so.

It is here necessary to say something about why the content of the revealed religion demands a less sensory medium as its mode of expression. This demand can be seen as a result of the way in which the conception of the divine found in the Christian doctrine of the Trinity cannot be adequately presented in a sensory form, even though, unlike the conception of the divine found in Judaism, it is a determinate one. This is because two of the three persons of the Trinity, namely, God the Father and the Holy Spirit, do not, unlike the Greek gods or even the person of Christ, lend themselves to being portrayed as self-conscious individuals. To illustrate this point further, one might cite the fact that while in religious paintings God is sometimes portrayed as an individual person, as an old man with a long flowing beard, for example, while in the case of the Holy Spirit recourse is often made to the image of a dove, these images are generally understood to be symbols as opposed to literal representations of what God and the Holy Spirit are in themselves. It may seem that the historical Christ, like a Greek god, is in this respect far easier to portray in sensory form; yet even here a

problem arises concerning Christ's divinity, so that recourse must once again be made to symbols, such as that of a nimbus. The Christian conception of God is, in short, of too intellectual or 'spiritual' a nature to be adequately expressed in sensory form. This more intellectual conception of God must therefore be brought to consciousness in the less sensory form of religious representational thought, so that the emergence of a new, more adequate conception of the divine is for Hegel inextricably linked with the transition from an essentially aesthetic way of knowing the divine to a more conceptual one. Consequently, while the Greek god had the image (*das Bild*) as the element of its existence, the Christian one is said by Hegel to have thought as its element.¹⁰

Since Hegel believes that the essential nature of the Christian God is revealed in the doctrine of the Trinity, art can at best only portray a truth which has been revealed to humankind independently of art. Hegel therefore describes the romantic form of art, which, in its earliest stages, he closely associates with Christian art, as one for which everything is concentrated on the single story of redemption (*Erlösungsgeschichte*); for it is only by portraying the latter that art can have any interest for the human will.¹¹ In this respect, art can be said to have become somewhat superfluous in the Christian world, in so far as its function of presenting the divine is concerned.¹² We may also add that with the dissolution of the ancient world, the Christian religion became, in Europe at least, the prime source of the ethical norms and values governing the actions of the members of a whole historical community, so that it can also be seen to take over the ethical function that Hegel accords to classical art, especially the original epic, of orienting human actions within a given society and of bringing about the unity of the society in question. However, since Hegel does not himself explicitly make this point in his lectures on aesthetics, it will be necessary to introduce some further steps in the course of this chapter, using ideas found in his philosophy of right and his philosophy of history, so as to show how he could have made this point and that it has some important implications in relation to our understanding of his lectures on aesthetics.

Hegel's account of the transition from the ancient Greek religion of art to the revealed religion of Christianity clearly turns on the idea of a change in the form by means of which the content of the latter is brought to consciousness that is demanded by this content itself, so that the transition in question must be understood as leading beyond the realm of the aesthetic altogether, whereas the transition from the symbolic form of art to the classical form of art occurred within the aesthetic realm. I shall argue below, however, that there is a significant problem with Hegel's attempt to justify the transition from art to religion in his theory of absolute spirit in terms of

the idea of a difference in form and an identity of content; indeed, I argue that Hegel would have done better to have viewed matters the other way round, and that he himself provides the reasons for this claim by suggesting that his aesthetics should be understood more in terms of his theory of objective spirit than in terms of his logic. The problem with viewing the transition of the ancient Greek religion of art to the revealed religion in terms of a difference in form but identity of content stems from Hegel's account of the development of art after the advent of Christianity, once this development is taken together with his account of the limitations of religious representational thought *vis-à-vis* pure thought. I shall show that, given his accounts of the romantic form of art and the limitations of religious representational thought, Hegel appears to collapse the distinction he makes between the form in which art is able to bring the divine to consciousness and the form in which the revealed religion does the same thing. This will in turn allow me to stress the importance of the ethical, rather than purely theological, content of Christianity for an understanding of Hegel's aesthetics, especially his views concerning the significance of art in the modern world.

2. Representational Thought and the Romantic Form of Art

Hegel describes the development of the romantic form of art as mirroring the transition from externality to inwardness which characterizes the transition from art and the form of intuition to the revealed religion and the form of representational thought. The way in which the romantic form of art involves a movement away from the externality of intuition inwards to the realm of representational thought is reflected in the movement away from works of art that are externally located in space and time to works of art whose medium is the internal consciousness of time and the inner space of mental ideas and images. In Hegel's lectures on aesthetics, the art forms most characteristic of the romantic form of art, which encompasses the period of art which begins with the death of Christ and extends to modern times, are therefore given as follows.

To begin with, there is painting, which is restricted to the dimensions of a plane surface, whereas architecture and sculpture, which Hegel associates with the symbolic form of art and the classical form of art respectively, are three-dimensional. Then there is music, which does away with the spatial element altogether by reducing the sensory aspect of art to the single inner

dimension of time. Finally, there is poetry, in which the remaining sensory element (i.e. sound) is reduced to the status of a sign, that is, the spoken or written word, 'whose meaning [*Sinn*] is to express representations [*Vorstellungen*], thoughts'.¹³ The development that the romantic form of art undergoes is thus one that, in poetry, reaches the stage at which the sensory material serves merely as the sign of the representations and feelings that now form the real content of art; whereas in classical Greek sculpture, for example, the external material constituted an integral part of the attempt to present the content. Hegel therefore views poetry as an art form in which the human spirit is no longer bound to an external sensory material, but is instead allowed to express itself exclusively in the inner space and inner time of representational thought. What is more, the increasing independence of art from an external sensory material that we encounter in the development of the romantic form of art mirrors the increasing inwardness that is characteristic of modern subjectivity in general, and of which the Christian religion is itself an expression. Although Hegel sometimes appears to suggest that the inwardness of Christian faith is something that art as such, which portrays its content in an objective form, necessarily lacks, so that this inwardness must be supplied by religion,¹⁴ the romantic form of art can be clearly thought to incorporate this moment of inwardness, given Hegel's own account of the process of internalization which he thinks characterizes this form of art; a point that will be made clearer in the next chapter. The inwardness of both the Christian religion and the romantic form of art is, in fact, the expression of a more general development, namely, the greater interiority that has come for Hegel increasingly to characterize the modern subject. I now intend to highlight some of the implications of Hegel's identification of the romantic form of art as a form of art whose most appropriate medium is that of language in relation to his account of the transition from a form of art that is essentially tied both to ethics and to religion, that is to say, the classical form of art as exemplified by the ancient Greek religion of art, to a form of religion that allegedly transcends the realm of the aesthetic, both in terms of its content and in terms of the way in which it brings the latter to consciousness.

While Hegel's account of the art forms that he takes to be most characteristic of the romantic form of art corresponds to the transition from intuition to representational thought which defines the transition from the Greek religion of art to the revealed religion, the former transition must, from a historical perspective, be viewed as a later development than the transition from the religion of art to the revealed religion. In any case, this seems to be Hegel's own position, for he characterizes painting, with which

the development of the romantic form of art begins, as a specifically Christian type of art; one that attempts to portray the story of salvation already revealed to consciousness by means of the teachings of the Christian religion. The development that art undergoes is in this way held to depend on the prior transition from a religion of art to a religion that is essentially independent of art with respect to the way in which it is most adequately able to bring its conception of the divine to consciousness. Hegel's account of the development of art cannot itself, therefore, be used to justify the transition from art to the revealed religion in his theory of absolute spirit, as if the revealed religion were to be understood as the outcome of a process in which the form of art (i.e. intuition) necessarily developed into the form of the revealed religion (i.e. representational thought) within the sphere of art itself, until the point was reached at which art was made to transcend its own peculiar sphere, which is determined by the form of intuition, in its attempt to present the Christian conception of God.¹⁵ The development that art undergoes instead simply reflects a development that has already taken place in the transition to the revealed religion and its corresponding form of knowledge (i.e. representational thought), namely, the transition from the ancient Greek to the Christian conception of the divine. As we have seen, this transition turns on the idea that Christianity introduced a new conception of the divine into the world and that it did so through a non-aesthetic presentation of this content; and, since this conception of the divine could not be adequately made present to consciousness by aesthetic means, the change of content is held to be inextricably linked to the change in form. In other words, the change of form was necessary in order to express this content. Otherwise, as with the oriental religions, apart from Judaism, that Hegel associates with the symbolic form of art, a futile attempt to express an implicit content by inadequate means would arise. The romantic form of art is in this respect to be thought of as an epiphenomenon of the change both to the content and to the form of consciousness that occurs with the emergence of the revealed religion.

Since that which is sensory cannot adequately express the exclusively spiritual content introduced into the world by means of the Christian religion, Hegel describes the principle of the romantic form of art in general as the demand to overcome externality, that is to say, the sensory form in which this content is expressed.¹⁶ We may ask, however, whether Hegel's account of the development that the romantic form of art undergoes cannot be used to justify the idea that art has the potential to express the content of the revealed religion, since this development itself involves a transition from intuition to representational thought; so that rather than simply striving to meet the demand to overcome externality, the romantic form of art can be also seen as capable of fulfilling such a demand. I now intend to

pursue this idea, arguing that it invites the suspicion that Hegel fails to demonstrate the necessity of the transition from art to the revealed religion of Christianity, in so far as this transition is understood to rest on the idea that the revealed religion takes over the function of communicating both ethical and religious ideas, and does so in a superior way to how art does this in virtue of its different form (i.e. representational thought). This in turn suggests the possibility of an alternative understanding of the relation of the content of the revealed religion to the aesthetic form of consciousness that Hegel associates with the oriental religions of the symbolic form of art and the classical Greek religion of art, namely, one that treats the revealed religion, like these other religions, as presenting its content aesthetically. I show, moreover, that this represents a position which is in harmony with some of the views that Hegel expresses in his lectures on the philosophy of religion, and that this interpretation is supported by the evidence provided by the student transcripts of Hegel's lectures on aesthetics.

As we have seen, Hegel's account of the transition from the ancient Greek religion of art to the revealed religion turns on the idea that the representational thought of the latter is closer in kind to the form of pure thought than is intuition, which constitutes the form in which the religion of art brings its content to consciousness. Hegel's account of the development that the romantic form of art undergoes implies, however, that art is, in principle at least, capable of portraying the content of the revealed religion as adequately as the revealed religion is able to represent this content, even if we accept that the content in question is of a more intellectual, or spiritual, nature than the ancient Greek conception of the divine. This is because, I shall now argue, Hegel's association of romantic art with an art form whose medium is that of language alone suggests, when taken in conjunction with his account of the limitations of religious representational thought *vis-à-vis* pure thought, that his distinction between a mythological religion of art and the revealed religion can be regarded as an arbitrary one. The main reason I shall give for this claim is that Hegel's views on the limitations of religious representational thought, when considered in the light of the potential of art with respect to that which it is capable of presenting implicit in his account of the art forms that he takes to be characteristic of the romantic form of art, suggest that the content of the revealed religion does not, in Hegel's own terms, need to be seen as demanding a non-aesthetic mode of presentation.

In relation to the idea that art is not capable of bringing to consciousness the conception of the divine that finds expression in the Christian doctrine of the Trinity, the following point is of particular importance: romantic works of art that rely on the spoken or written word alone, such as poetry,

for Hegel himself have representational thought as their form. This implies that the idea that art as such and the revealed religion differ in virtue of their respective forms (i.e. intuition and representational thought), and thereby also differ with respect to the type of content that they are capable of bringing to consciousness, is untenable. If this point can be more firmly established, Hegel's claim that the revealed religion is, in virtue of its form alone, a more suitable vehicle than art for bringing the Christian conception of the divine to consciousness, begins to look rather weak. Yet, as we have seen, this is precisely how Hegel seems to justify the necessity of the transition from art to religion in his lectures on aesthetics. There are in fact a number of reasons that Hegel's account of the limitations of religious representational thought can be taken to imply the identity of this means of bringing the divine to consciousness with the means employed by art, in so far as the latter restricts itself to using language alone; and this in turn suggests that art in principle has the same potential as religious representational thought for bringing the content of the revealed religion to consciousness.

To begin with, religious representational thought retains an essential feature of the sensory type of consciousness which Hegel associates with the form of art, so that a significant overlap between intuition and representational thought must be thought to exist. This is the way in which the various determinations of the representational consciousness are isolated from each other, with the result that their unity depends on their being the representations of a single consciousness. For Hegel, this has further implications with respect to the rationality of the content of consciousness. The type of 'external' relation which characterizes the relation of the living Christ to the social subject spirit is one example of this, since it suffers from one of the main limitations to which Hegel thinks representational thought in general is subject. This is the failure of representational thought to exhibit the necessity underlying its various determinations, which are consequently linked together in a merely external fashion, leaving us with a set of fixed determinations, each of which is simple and remains independent alongside other determinations; so that their combination comes to depend on the words 'and' and 'also', which link these determinations together within a single consciousness.¹⁷ In short, the kind of external relation that characterizes the sensory as such, on account of the way in which each particular sensory item occupies a particular point in space and time, is merely internalized within the representational consciousness. We can therefore think of the various representations that make up the Christian doctrine of the Trinity as existing in apparent isolation from each other in the inner space of the representational consciousness, as well as being isolated from

each other on account of the successive appearance of one discrete determination after another that unfolds in inner time. Although the separation of the various determinations of religious representational thought is one that occurs within the realm of inner space and time, so that the location in space and time which characterizes intuition is internalized, this process of internalizing the conditions of intuition is, as we have seen, equally a feature of the romantic form of art, in so far as it restricts itself to employing language alone. The representations of the revealed religion thus share in common with art, in so far as it restricts itself to using language alone, the same inner space and inner time within which various determinations, which might otherwise exhibit no connection among themselves, have to some extent been unified into a coherent whole, without, however, the necessity of their relations to each other having been demonstrated; a task which for Hegel falls to the highest stage of absolute spirit, that is to say, philosophy.

In the case of religious representational thought, the unfolding of its successive moments in the dimension of inner time is in fact one that is even projected into the externality of historical time, so that its determinations are treated as if they were independent of the representational consciousness itself. This is because for the revealed religion it is not only the remote past (i.e. the life of the historical Jesus) that is of significance, since in Christian eschatology reconciliation with the divine is projected into an indefinite future, into a Kingdom of Heaven, so that its satisfaction 'remains burdened with the antithesis of a beyond'.¹⁸ In this respect, the romantic form of art, which reveals the full extent of art's potential to free itself from the conditions of intuition, might even be viewed as closer in kind to a purely conceptual knowledge than is religious representational thought. For by dispensing with sensory elements that are conceived to be, or, rather, to have been, externally present in space and time, as with the figure of the historical Jesus, it arguably carries out the process of internalization, which is common to it and the revealed religion, more thoroughly than the latter.

From what has been said above, it seems that there is no good reason for thinking that art, in so far as it restricts itself to employing language alone, lacks the potential to make the transition from intuition to representational thought within its own distinctive sphere of activity; a possibility that is further suggested by the way in which Hegel himself associates language with representational thought.¹⁹ He maintains, moreover, that the word, as the sign of representational thought, is the 'most flexible material . . . ready to express everything concerning spirit'.²⁰ This can be taken to mean that art forms which restrict themselves to using language as the main means of expression are capable of presenting that which other art forms find it

difficult to present, such as inner states (e.g. emotions) and events taking place over long periods of time or in different places, which helps explain the following statement that Hegel is recorded as having made in his lectures on aesthetics: 'The most complete form of art is poetry. It is the expression of spirit as such, the richest in content, which can internalize all the content of the universe'.²¹ This line of thought also relates to the claim that the sublime cannot be the object of the fine arts but only of poetry.²² For, given the link between Hegel's views on the sublime and Kant's theory of the mathematical sublime, this claim can be interpreted as meaning that poetry is the most adequate means of presenting the sublime in the sense that it, of all the art forms, has the greatest potential for uniting representations into a single intuition, even when these representations involve extensive temporal and spatial relations. This is not to say that language can ever fully express the abstract, indeterminate conception of the divine which Hegel identifies as the content of the various religions that he associates with the symbolic form of art; it can, however, give a greater sense of the ultimately futile striving to express this content through its greater potential to combine representations. In this respect, although art may be said to lack the capacity to present the first moment of the doctrine of the Trinity, which corresponds to this abstract conception of the divine, the fact that Hegel associates religious representational thought with language suggests that the revealed religion suffers from the same limitation. Unless, that is, he were to argue that religious representational thought was purely conceptual in nature, in which case a different problem would arise, that of collapsing the distinction between religion and philosophy.

While the way in which the form of art becomes, in poetry, that of representational thought implies that art is in principle capable of bringing the content of the Christian religion to consciousness as adequately as the revealed religion is able to do this, I now intend to give some further reasons for thinking that Hegel fails to rule out the idea of a successful aesthetic presentation of the specifically Christian conception of the divine. This will in turn lead me to argue that mythology, which Hegel elsewhere regards as being an aesthetic form of consciousness, can be thought to play an essential role in orienting human thoughts and actions in the Christian world, even though the latter introduces a very different conception of the divine into the world to the one found in the ancient Greek religion of art. In this way, the link between mythology and religion found in the latter can be thought to exist even in the case of the Christian religion. In order to rule out the possibility of establishing such a link between mythology, as an essentially aesthetic form of consciousness, and the revealed religion together with its

corresponding form of ethical life, Hegel clearly needs to show that the conception of the divine which finds expression in the doctrine of the Trinity involves representations that are essentially different from, and superior in kind to, those which art or myth, in so far as they involve the use of language alone, are able to express. Yet although Hegel needs to introduce an argument that positively shows that the revealed religion cannot be thought to belong to the aesthetic realm, or else one that establishes more firmly art's inherent inability to bring to consciousness the conception of the divine found in the Christian doctrine of the Trinity, it is difficult to know what such an argument might be, given Hegel's account of the limitations of religious representational thought.

Despite the fact that art appears to share the same form as the revealed religion in so far as it uses language alone as its main vehicle of expression, one reason that Hegel might give for claiming that the revealed religion must nevertheless be seen to transcend the aesthetic realm is that the romantic form of art, through becoming identical to religion in terms of its form, is no longer art in the true sense of the word. In other words, the increasing abstractness of the media and the inwardness which come to characterize the romantic form of art mean that art is no longer able to bring the content that it shares in common with religion and philosophy to consciousness in the form that is peculiar to art itself, namely, intuition, which essentially requires that art presents its content in an external sensory material. Although at its highest level, that is, in poetry, art is said by Hegel to transcend itself by becoming thought,²³ this argument looks highly problematic; for it appears to rest on an arbitrary and overly restrictive conception of what is to count as a true work of art, namely, the idea that a true work of art must be one that not only exists in the inner time and space of the representational consciousness but also has an external presence in space. Yet this would commit Hegel to the absurd view that literary works of art are not art in the proper sense of the term; a view that he cannot seriously be thought to have held given the amount of attention he accords such works of art in his lectures on aesthetics. Admittedly, the written word itself has an external presence in space and time; however, the written word is, for Hegel, merely the means of communicating feelings, representations and thoughts. In this respect, its external presence in space and time is inessential to the presentation of its content. In any case, religious doctrine is equally dependent on the written word, since, in the case of the revealed religion, its conception of the divine derives from scripture, more specifically, from an interpretation of certain teachings and passages contained in the latter.

A related argument might be that art which successfully presents the Christian conception of the divine would no longer be 'beautiful' art. For a successful aesthetic presentation of the Christian conception of the divine, given the nature of its content, particularly the sufferings of Christ, can no longer be considered to be beautiful in a conventional sense, that is to say, in so far as beauty is identified with a pleasing formal harmony. Indeed, Hegel himself stresses that the person of Christ cannot be portrayed as an authentic ideal, that is to say, in the same way as the classical Greek ideal, in which there exists a harmony between the natural form and the conception of the divine that is to be expressed by means of this form.²⁴ This leads Hegel to go so far as to speak of 'the dissolution of the ideal [*die Auflösung des Ideals*]', which is brought about by the way in which 'affirmative ugliness [*das affirmative Unschöne*]' enters into art,²⁵ by which he can be taken to mean an ugliness demanded by the substantial content of the Christian story of redemption, which art seeks to present. The problem with this argument is that, as we have seen, Hegel's account of the ideal does not imply such a conventional notion of beauty, for it demands only that the content is one that lends itself to being presented in the form of art, in the sense of its containing a set of sensory determinations that can be unified in a single intuition; and, moreover, that this mode of presentation is the most adequate one in which the content can be brought to human consciousness. This is compatible with the idea of the 'ugly' presentation of a content that demands to be presented in precisely this way, as with the sufferings of Christ, as long as the content in question is one that lends itself to being presented in accordance with the relations of space and time to which all our representations must conform. The real question therefore remains whether Hegel provides any decisive grounds for claiming that religious representational thought is better equipped to present the Christian conception of the divine than art, or any other aesthetic form of consciousness such as myth, is able to do.

One possible difference between religious representational thought and art, in so far as the latter restricts itself to employing language alone, might be thought to rest on the fact that the doctrine of the Trinity does not rely on the kind of poetic devices, such as metaphor, which are regularly employed in literary works. Hegel seems to accept, however, that religious representational thought is characterized by its employment of such devices. He claims, in fact, that it consists of what can be generally termed images (*Bilder*), which are drawn from immediate intuition but have an 'inner' meaning, since the image has an allegorical or symbolic function.²⁶ For instance, the representation that God has begotten a son (i.e. Christ) is a metaphor drawn from a relationship familiar to the natural consciousness;

and even if this representation in its own way reveals an essential moment of the true nature of the divine, the allegorical or symbolical elements it contains nevertheless prevent the latter from being comprehended as it is in itself. Consequently, Hegel's description of representational thought as lying between intuition and thought because it is of a figurative nature can be held to apply just as much to the representational thought of the revealed religion as to that of art, in so far as the latter restricts itself to using language alone.²⁷

Religious representational thought and art might be said to differ essentially from each other in virtue of the fact that the former derives from scripture which has its basis in historical fact, such as the fact that there once existed a person known as Jesus of Nazareth who really was the Son of God. However, we have already seen that the tendency of religious representational thought to treat its determinations as if they belonged to historical time is at odds with the process of internalization which for Hegel makes representational thought into a more suitable vehicle than art for bringing the Christian conception of the divine to consciousness. An appeal to historical fact would, therefore, run counter to the development which for Hegel is meant to justify the necessity of the transition from art to religion in his theory of absolute spirit. Moreover, Hegel appears to reject the idea that the truths contained in scripture have any basis in historical fact when he identifies another limitation of religious representational thought as the way in which it presents the eternal truth in a historical shape, and thus ends up containing what can be seen as two conflicting elements: the eternal and the finite. Consequently, the story of Jesus is held by him to be something twofold. On the one hand, it contains an 'outward history [*äußerliche Geschichte*]', which is only 'the ordinary story [*gewöhnliche Geschichte*] of a human being', a story in which Jesus is represented as a particular person who was born in a certain place and at a certain time, who performed certain acts and eventually died on the cross. On the other hand, this story equally has the divine as its content, since Jesus is the Son of God; and for Hegel it is only this divine element that is 'the inward, the genuine, the substantial dimension of this history' and 'the object of reason'.²⁸ In relation to this last point, it needs to be borne in mind that philosophy is, in Hegel's view, able to overcome this limitation of religious representational thought because it involves a purely conceptual knowledge of the essential truths underlying such representations. This distinction between the historical features of the life of Jesus, which for Hegel are merely external ones, and the inner truth of this life, which only philosophy is able to comprehend properly, thus appears to reduce the historical dimension of the story of

Jesus to the status of a product of the human imagination. In other words, the historical dimension of the life of Jesus concerns only the form, but not the content, of the revealed religion. Consequently, rather than allowing us to make an essential distinction between religious representational thought and art, Hegel's views on the relevance of historical fact in relation to the true meaning of the Christian conception of the divine support the idea that mythology and religion can be thought to belong together even in the case of the revealed religion; and this is a point to which I shall shortly return.

Given all that has been said above, I believe there are strong grounds for claiming that even in his account of the revealed religion Hegel could have retained the idea of an aesthetic presentation of its content. Such a step would, however, undermine the firm distinction that Hegel makes between art and religion in his theory of absolute spirit, thus preventing him from giving the latter the kind of triadic structure which informs his philosophical system. I argue below that if we ignore such systematic requirements, it becomes possible, on the basis of the student transcripts of his lectures on aesthetics, to attribute to Hegel a more consistent position which, as with his account of the original epic, involves understanding art in its relation to the ethical life of the people out of which it emerges. I show, moreover, that maintaining the link between religion and mythology found in Hegel's account of the Greek religion of art even in the case of the revealed religion is perfectly compatible with this position. Yet the distinctive content of the revealed religion (i.e. the doctrines that serve to distinguish it from all other historical religions), and the inwardness characteristic of the individual's disposition in relation to this content, would be still enough to distinguish it from the Greek religion of art. In this respect, Hegel could have argued that the transition from art to religion involves a change of content rather than a change of form, instead of his seeking to show that art, religion and philosophy have an identical content but differ with respect to the form in which they bring this content to consciousness.

The possibility of extending the link between religion and mythology on the basis of Hegel's philosophy to include the revealed religion of Christianity was first suggested by the reduction of the whole life of Jesus to the status of myth undertaken by his follower, David Friedrich Strauss, in his *Life of Jesus*. Strauss saw his rejection of the historical content of the life of Jesus, together with his claim that such a rejection does not affect the truth of Christianity, as having their source in Hegel's distinction between representational thought and conceptual thought, which for Strauss raised the possibility of bringing respect for biblical documents and church dogmas into harmony with the freedom of thought.²⁹ If we compare Strauss's position to Hegel's, we can, I think, regard

a left Hegelian interpretation of Hegel's philosophy as finding some support in his lectures on aesthetics. Such an interpretation is, moreover, consistent with Hegel's views on the conditions that form the background to his understanding of the role and significance of art in the modern world.

3. Traces of Left Hegelianism in Hegel's Lectures on Aesthetics

The division that Hegelianism underwent after Hegel's death in 1831 was in large part attributable to his views concerning the person and story of Christ. Indeed, the original split into right, left and centre schools of Hegelianism can be traced back to a division made by David Friedrich Strauss based on the three possible ways of answering the question whether and to what extent the gospel story of Jesus is proven to be history by Hegel's idea of the unity of the divine and human natures. The three possible ways of answering this question are, according to Strauss, as follows: either the entire gospel (right Hegelianism), or merely part of it (the centre) or neither the whole nor part of it (left Hegelianism) is to be confirmed as historical by the idea of the divine-human unity.³⁰ The view that the left Hegelian answer to this question is the one closest to Hegel's own position is suggested by the fact that, as previously mentioned, Hegel claims that the story of the life of Jesus has both an outward, external dimension and an inner, divine one, and that the latter constitutes the substantial content of the story of his life. For this claim could be interpreted as drawing a firm distinction between the historical facts concerning the life of Jesus, which are held to be inessential to the truth of Christianity, and the essential ideas represented by the story of this life. In a similar vein, Hegel claims that the 'witness of the spirit', as opposed to factors such as miracles and historical verification, is 'the absolutely proper ground of belief, the absolute testimony to the content of a religion'.³¹ This again suggests that he regards historical fact as being inessential to faith, in so far as the truth of its content is concerned. Moreover, as we have already seen, by comprehending the ideas of religious representational thought, which constitute the substantial content of faith, in purely conceptual terms, philosophy is able, according to Hegel, to demonstrate the essential truths that are to be found in the doctrines of the Christian religion. This view of the truth of Christianity can by itself be seen to imply an ambiguous attitude to the Christian religion: for Hegel appears to want to offer a philosophical justification of religion by means of a critique of its representational form of thought.³²

To further illustrate how such issues relate to Hegel's lectures on aesthetics, I now turn to Michael Theunissen's attempt to undermine the claim that Hegel thought of the idea that there was once a historical figure called Jesus who really was the Son of God as being inessential to the truth of the Christian religion. Theunissen deals with this question specifically in relation to Hegel's account of the transition from art to religion as given in his *Encyclopaedia* theory of absolute spirit, which provides the systematic background to his lectures on aesthetics. Theunissen opposes Strauss's position by characterizing the transition in question as a leap from the sphere of fantasy into the area of historical facticity, using examples from Hegel's lectures on aesthetics that stress the life, sufferings and death of Christ to support this claim.³³ Although the student transcripts of Hegel's lectures state that the first content of the romantic form of art is one in which the suffering and death of Christ are emphasized,³⁴ I have already indicated above the problems involved in explaining the transition from art to religion in terms of the way in which the Christian religion is based on historical fact. Theunissen seeks, however, to undermine Strauss's claim that he was merely following the lead given by Hegel's philosophy of religion in reducing the life of Jesus to the status of myth, by attempting to show that for Hegel the Incarnation, as a historical event, is just as necessary as the revelation of God in finite spirit (i.e. humanity as a whole); so that rather than adding something to the absolute content, the religious consciousness is directed by the content itself to represent absolute spirit in the shape of a particular historical person.³⁵ To support this interpretation of Hegel's position, Theunissen points to two main reasons that Hegel has for viewing the Incarnation as an actual historical event.

The first reason that he gives is that the specifically Christian form of representational thought is defined by its relation to its peculiar object, which is the actuality of the historical fact in question, so that the latter must be presupposed in all its givenness and cannot, therefore, be considered to be a mere representation or fiction.³⁶ Although it is certainly true that for Hegel the Incarnation forms the peculiar object of Christian representational thought to the extent that the person of the Son is an essential moment of the doctrine of the Trinity, through which God's true nature is first fully revealed to human consciousness, I shall argue below that this does not imply its actuality as an historical event. The second reason that Theunissen gives is that the dialectic of the self-externalization of absolute spirit requires a radical opposition; and, since absolute spirit at first finds itself in the element of eternity and abstract universality, the opposition in question must involve temporality and the contingent facticity of the particular.³⁷ On the basis of this systematic requirement, Theunissen rejects

Strauss's position, which is that God reveals himself in humanity as a whole and the totality of human history, but not in a single human being; and he argues instead that for Hegel both forms of revelation are compatible with each other.³⁸

With respect to the first claim, the objection can be made that even if the specifically Christian form of representational thought is defined by its relation to a particular historical event (i.e. the Incarnation), Hegel's account of representational thought does not warrant the further claim that the givenness of this historical event must be presupposed. As we have seen, Hegel describes the use of images as being one of the main features of religious representational thought; and it is clearly possible for an image to form the object of one's consciousness without this object being the image of something that exists, or once existed, in the external world; hence the compatibility of Hegel's position with Strauss's reduction of the life of Jesus to the status of myth. This compatibility rests, as previously mentioned, on the fact that Hegel's account of the limitations of religious representational thought implies that the historical claims made in relation to the story of Jesus's life are to be attributed to the form, rather than to the content, of the revealed religion. Consequently, there do not appear to be any grounds for thinking that the Incarnation should be regarded as being anything more than the image of a historical event, with the question concerning whether this event actually occurred remaining a matter of indifference. The only relevant historical event would then be the precise moment in history at which this representation entered human consciousness. This also serves to undermine the idea, which Theunissen may have had in mind, that there must have once existed an object in the sensible world corresponding to the religious representation of this same object (i.e. the person of the historical Jesus), which now forms the object of Christian faith in the medium of representational thought, because otherwise the representation in question would never have entered human consciousness.³⁹ By stressing the givenness of the historical fact of God's becoming man and taking on a sensory form, Theunissen appears, in fact, to collapse the distinction between objects of representational thought and objects of sense certainty, which for Hegel belong to completely different spheres of human knowledge, even though he criticizes Strauss for doing the very same thing.⁴⁰

Although Hegel's account of religious representational thought cannot be used to show that the Christian representation of the God-man presupposes the historical fact of the Incarnation, there remains Theunissen's claim that the dialectic of the self-externalization of absolute spirit demands a radical opposition of the kind found in the transition from the element of

eternity and abstract universality to a single historical event and a single human being. If, for the sake of argument, we grant that such a radical opposition is indeed a requirement of Hegel's system, and that it demands the revelation of God in a single human being, doubts could still be raised concerning the question as to why the historical figure of Jesus of Nazareth must be the one to fulfil this demand.⁴¹ For it could be argued that for Hegel the task of speculative philosophy is simply to demonstrate the necessity of the divine-human unity, whereas the task of demonstrating in which individual this unity becomes actual must remain a matter of historical enquiry.⁴² Yet even this more modest demand appears problematic, since, as previously mentioned in connection with Theunissen's first argument for the necessity of the historical fact of the Incarnation, there are grounds for claiming that the necessity of the divine-human unity requires only that the representation of an individual in which this unity becomes actual enters consciousness, but not that the individual in question once existed. The idea that for Hegel such representations can be regarded as immanent to consciousness can be further illustrated if we compare his views on the representational character of Christian doctrine to Strauss's conception of myth. This will in turn allow a firmer link to be established between Strauss's mythologizing approach to the content of the Christian religion and some important features of Hegel's lectures on aesthetics.

For Strauss, New Testament myths are the unintentional clothing of primitive Christian ideas in a historical form, that is to say, the result of a gradual process of oral transmission, in the course of which these ideas have been transformed into alleged facts about the life of Jesus.⁴³ Although Strauss concedes that these mythical embellishments may have had as their starting-point a person called Jesus, who grew up in Nazareth, was baptized by someone called John, gathered disciples around him, taught in Jewish lands and was crucified, he argues that this historical framework has been progressively supplemented by what appear to be a set of historical facts, but which are, in fact, the mythical expression of certain ideas awakened in people by the person of Jesus. These ideas stem from expectations concerning the Messiah found in the Old Testament. As we shall see, they also consist of other, new ideas which have not been properly comprehended, and therefore instead come to express themselves in mythic form. On Strauss's view, tradition thus replaces the historical Jesus, who may have served to awaken these ideas, with a mythical Jesus, though, for reasons given above, it is doubtful, I believe, that Hegel would regard even this minor concession to historical fact as being necessary. It now remains to show how Strauss's account of the mythic nature of the gospels and his

reduction of the life of Jesus to the status of myth relate to Hegel's lectures on aesthetics.

To begin with, as a product of tradition, the gospels cannot be regarded as the work of a single individual but are instead, as Strauss puts it, the work of 'the universal individual [*des allgemeinen Individuums*]' of the society out of which they arise, though not in a conscious, intentional manner.⁴⁴ This is also true of the various aesthetic productions found in Hegel's account of the symbolic form of art and of the original epic, which belongs to the classical form of art. In the former case, this is because mythology, which here forms the content of art, is the product of a people's attempt to present its conception of the divine in sensory form; a mode of production that is of an instinctive rather than a conscious kind, except in Judaism, which in any case involves the recognition of the ultimate futility of attempting to present the conception of the divine implicit in the other oriental religions that Hegel associates with the symbolic form of art in sensory form. While in the case of the original epic, the artist gives clearer expression to a commonly held understanding of the divine and the ethical, so that although the work of art may have been the work of a single individual artist, it is equally the product of the mythic consciousness of a whole people. The 'productive fantasy' that Hegel mentions in his lectures on aesthetics,⁴⁵ together with that which it produces, may therefore be understood as the activity and work of a collective consciousness, whose content is then given its definitive form by means of art. Strauss likewise suggests that we can view the production of New Testament myth as involving the instinctive activity of the Christian community's productive fantasy; and we might therefore think of the writers of the gospels as giving these mythic productions a more determinate and abiding form, just as for Hegel the epic poet gives the mythic consciousness of the ancient Greeks such a form.

Strauss's ideas concerning the mythological character of the Christian religion are especially relevant to Hegel's description of the Christian religion as the religion of freedom as well as truth.⁴⁶ For the way in which the teachings of this religion are the product of the mythical collective consciousness of the Christian community means that the norms orienting the actions of the members of this community can be seen as a result of their own activity, so that in this sense we have an act of self-legislation, as opposed to an acting on the basis of an authority which is merely given, as is the case with the Christian religion when its content is thought of as being merely revealed to humankind. This would help explain why in his later writings and lectures Hegel no longer treats the Christian religion as the epitome of an object which, in its mere givenness, confronts the individual as something

alien that nevertheless dominates him, as he is said to do in his early critical writings on religion.⁴⁷

The possibility of understanding the revealed religion as being essentially mythic in nature, and in this way providing an explanation of Hegel's claim that it is the religion of freedom as well as truth, can be further demonstrated with reference to Strauss's characterization of Hegel's speculative Christology. Strauss thinks of the consciousness of the unity of God and man as depending on humankind's own conception of itself, so that this consciousness is viewed as being essentially a process. To begin with, there is humankind as natural spirit, which involves the idolization of nature. Then there is spirit governed by law, though in such a way that its naturalness is mastered in a merely external fashion, with God as lawgiver being set in opposition to humankind. Finally, the need is felt for the idea of a God-man (*Gott Mensch*), in which humankind can be viewed as being raised to the level of the divine and God as descending to the level of humankind.⁴⁸ This process, whereby humankind's changing conception of itself goes hand in hand with its changing conception of God's essential nature, can be seen to correspond to Hegel's understanding of the dynamic governing the transition from the oriental world and the oriental religions that he associates with the symbolic form of art, through Judaism and its transcendent God, to the anthropomorphism of the Christian doctrine of the Incarnation. Hegel views the process in question as an historical one, in the sense that different conceptions of the divine belong to different epochs, each of which is characterized by a particular self-understanding on the part of humankind. This raises the question as to whether the Christian community's self-understanding absolutely demands the retention of its religious doctrines in mythological form, even under different cultural and historical conditions to those in which these doctrines entered human consciousness. In other words, although there are grounds for claiming that Hegel could have extended the idea of an aesthetic presentation of the divine to include the Christian religion, the question still arises as to whether the self-understanding that this conception of the divine has the potential to become independent of this mode of presentation at a later stage in human history. In what follows, I show that for Hegel it does because humankind is in the position to gain a purely conceptual knowledge of the ideas that are integral to the self-understanding which is characteristic of the Christian world, so that the presentation of these ideas in mythical form is no longer strictly necessary. This conceptual knowledge is to be found, however, in Hegel's philosophy of right rather than in his logic.

To illustrate this point, I intend to use the example of a religious teaching to which Hegel himself refers, and which he clearly thinks has major ethical implications: the teaching that the individual as such, as the object and end of God's love, is of infinite value.⁴⁹ This teaching implies that all individuals are, in the sight of God, of equal value; and, as we shall see below, there is no doubt that Hegel regards this teaching as having transformed the world. Moreover, the teaching in question is mentioned in his 1828/29 lectures on aesthetics at the beginning of his account of the romantic form of art.⁵⁰ We may consequently assume that it formed an important element in what Hegel took to be the ethical and historical background to this form of art. This teaching also helps explain why Hegel thinks that Christianity was so historically effective, though this historical effectiveness will be seen to depend on stripping the teaching that the individual as such, as the object and end of God's love, is of infinite value, of the mythical form by means of which it first entered consciousness. My interpretation of how Hegel strips this teaching of its mythical form rests on his account of the will as the fundamental principle of his political philosophy, so that attention is shifted away from Hegel's theory of absolute spirit to his theory of objective spirit, which, as we shall see in due course, has an important role to play in his reflections on the limited significance that art can be accorded in the modern world, whose form of ethical life is one that for Hegel became a real possibility in Europe in the wake of the French Revolution.

4. The End of Mythology

The French Revolution can be viewed as a historical event that for Hegel represents the earthly expression of philosophical theory, in so far as the latter, in the shape of the modern natural law tradition, had come to make the principle of the will into the main source of political legitimacy. According to Hegel, this step was decisively taken by Rousseau, who, with his theory of the general will, made the concept of the will into the principle of the state, thereby basing the latter on thought.⁵¹ As we shall see, Hegel's theory of modern ethical life is itself based on the concept of the will, while this theory provides the background to his thoughts on the significance of art in the modern world as presented in his lectures on aesthetics given in Restoration Germany. It is therefore necessary to gain a clearer idea of what Hegel takes the essence of the will to be, namely, freedom, and how he thinks this essence is realized in the modern world. Although the French Revolution forms a highly significant stage in this process of realization, Hegel is critical

of the conception of freedom that he believes characterized it. In a letter from 1814, he claims that the French Republic's conception of freedom was a purely abstract one, which originated in the Enlightenment and had to pass out of 'its own destructive actuality' over and into another land, the land of 'self-conscious spirit'.⁵² We can interpret the transition in question as being one that moves from the external events of the French Revolution to the inwardness of German philosophical thought as it developed in the wake of Kant's critical philosophy, culminating in Hegel's own philosophical system. For in German Idealism we find a process of reflection on the nature of willing as such, and the attempt to determine thereby the true nature and possibility of human freedom. In Hegel's case, the result of this process of reflection on the nature of willing as such is his theory of the concept of the will. I shall now give a brief account of the structure of this concept and then relate it to the teaching that the individual as such, as the object and end of God's love, is of infinite value; a teaching that can be seen for Hegel to constitute the main ethical content of the Christian religion, so that it has a vital role to play in his thoughts concerning the form of ethical life that provides the background to the development of the romantic form of art.

Hegel's concept of the will comprises three moments, with the third moment consisting in the unity of the two previous moments. He describes the first moment of the will as one of '*pure indeterminacy* or of the "I"'s pure reflection into itself, in which every limitation, every content . . . is dissolved'.⁵³ Hegel here has in mind the abstract, self-certain form of subjectivity in which the subject is aware of its capacity to conceive of itself in abstraction from any given forms of determination, whether they concern that which is given by nature (e.g. its natural drives) or that which is a given feature of one's social world (e.g. ethical commands based on tradition alone). This capacity allows the subject to adopt a reflective attitude towards these determinations, enabling it to choose to identify itself with them or to reject them. Hegel terms the capacity to conceive of oneself in abstraction from any particular determination 'negative' freedom; and he specifically associates this form of freedom with the 'fury of destruction' found in the period of the French Revolution known as the Terror, on the grounds that, by itself, this form of freedom constitutes an entirely abstract conception of freedom, which, if it seeks to actualize itself, results in the rejection and overthrow of any limitation whatsoever.⁵⁴ The limitations in question include the kinds of laws and social and political institutions which in Hegel's philosophy of right serve to orient human action.

The capacity to conceive of oneself as an abstract 'I', and the associated power to endorse or reject anything that is merely given, constitutes a

condition of the sense of equality which was a defining feature of the French Revolution. For in so far as each and every individual possesses this capacity, they can be held to be identical with each other. In this respect, the first moment of the will, the moment of abstract universality, can be taken to correspond to the Christian teaching that all individuals are equal before God. This teaching can in turn be thought to represent a vital aspect of freedom that finds its secular expression in the modern state, especially in the sphere of modern ethical life that Hegel calls civil society, where we find the '*universal* person, in which [respect] *all* are identical', so that a '*human being counts as such because he is a human being*, not because he is a Jew, Catholic, Protestant, German, Italian, etc.'⁵⁵ The person in question is here to be understood as someone who is identical with others in the sense that all the particular determinations that make human beings into the particular individuals that they are have been abstracted from. Hegel accordingly describes this aspect of personality as the consciousness of oneself as 'a completely abstract "I" in which all concrete limitation and validity are negated and invalidated'.⁵⁶ Particular examples of the way in which the principle of equality is realized in the modern state include the fact that it contains a legal system before which all individuals are held to be equal, and that it recognizes such rights as the right of the individual to enter a trade or occupation of his or her own choosing, as opposed to being tied to certain occupations because of the circumstances of his or her birth, which is a natural event, and in this respect something merely given. Consequently, despite its limitations, Hegel considers the French Revolution to have been historically necessary in so far as it attempted to transform society in accordance with the principle of equality, which itself derives from the first moment of the will, the moment of abstract universality.

The first moment of the will constitutes the basis of human freedom because it allows human beings to resolve on one object of the will rather than another, as opposed to their being determined by natural impulse alone or by that which authority simply prescribes. Hegel terms this capacity to abstract from any given content, and to resolve on one object of the will rather than another, arbitrariness (*Willkür*), that is to say, the capacity to exercise free choice.⁵⁷ Willing must, however, also be thought to involve the making of actual choices; hence Hegel's description of the second moment of the will as the moment of 'the *finitude or particularization* of the "I"'.⁵⁸ Since the act of willing comprises both the first and second moments of the will, and constitutes an act of self-determination on the part of the subject, the third moment of the will is held to be a unity of the two previous moments in which the 'I' 'remains with itself [*bei sich*]'.⁵⁹ In other words,

by resolving on one object of the will rather than another, a person determines him- or herself as an individual distinct from other individuals in virtue of the different choices that he or she makes. This individuality is therefore a product of a person's freedom, as opposed to its being the result of the physical, psychological and cultural features that determine individuals in a merely immediate fashion. This capacity to be self-determining nevertheless rests on the abstract freedom of the first moment of the will; and this is why Hegel describes the concept of the person as follows: 'as *this* person, I am completely determined in all respects . . . I am finite, yet totally pure self-reference, and thus know myself in my finitude as *infinite, universal and free*'.⁶⁰

I have already mentioned how the first moment of the concept of the will can be related to the teaching that the individual as such, as the object and end of God's love, is of infinite value, since it can be seen to correspond to the idea that all individuals are equal before God. The moment of particularity found in Hegel's account of both personality and the concept of the will can likewise be related to this religious teaching, this time by interpreting it as meaning that all individuals are not valued by God simply as an anonymous mass, but are also valued in virtue of their particular, contingent individuality. In his account of the moral standpoint, which involves a deeper reflection on the nature of the will, since personality here becomes its own object,⁶¹ Hegel accordingly speaks of the right of the subject's particularity to find satisfaction, which he also calls the right of subjective freedom, as constituting the fundamental difference between antiquity and the modern age, that is to say, between the pagan and the Christian views of the world.⁶² The Christian religion is thus held to have introduced an entirely new ethical content into the world.

A particular example of the way in which Christianity did this can be identified by looking at how the right of subjective freedom that it introduced into the world relates to the idea of happiness, which Hegel describes as a condition in which the subject's various drives are brought into harmony with each other.⁶³ The idea of happiness must be thought to involve a process of reflection by the subject on what is to form the particular content of this idea, with the subject's various drives being estimated and compared to one another, so as to determine how these various drives might be combined into a harmonious whole, and which drives must be suppressed and subordinated to other ones in order to achieve this end. In this way, that which is merely given, in this case the subject's various drives, becomes an object of the faculty of free choice; and thought must therefore be seen to have some power over the natural force of these drives, so that the individual

concerned is not determined by natural impulse alone. As mentioned above, Hegel identifies this capacity to act independently of natural impulse with the first moment of the will, while he identifies any decisions with regard to the particular content of happiness with the second moment of the will. The right of the subject's particularity to find satisfaction means that it is necessary for the modern state to take into consideration the particular ends that individuals have, whether the content of these ends is concerned with the satisfaction of their basic needs (i.e. the need for food, clothing and shelter), or with their opinions concerning what would make them happy. Hegel claims, in fact, that it is the way in which the modern state enables individuals to experience the satisfaction of their particularity that constitutes its peculiar strength.⁶⁴ The modern state, in which the principle of equality and the principle of particularity are realized, is in this way conceived as the secular expression of the Christian teaching that, as the object and end of God's love, all individuals are equal before God, though not as an anonymous mass, since they are also valued in virtue of their particular, contingent individuality. This teaching, however, first had to enter consciousness before human beings could transform the world in accordance with it; and, as I have argued, the form in which it did so is, according to Hegel, of a mythical nature.

Hegel's account of how the modern state, based on the principle of the will, serves as the earthly expression of the teaching that, as the object and end of God's love, all individuals are equal before God may appear to have very little to do with art, which forms the subject matter of his lectures on aesthetics. There are, however, at least two reasons that make it of considerable significance in relation to the latter. To begin with, the rise of the principle of subjective freedom will be seen in the next chapter to play an important role in Hegel's account of the romantic form of art and the way in which he limits the significance of art in the modern world. Secondly, Hegel's theory of modern ethical life will be seen to provide the background to his remarks on the novel, which, I argue in Chapter 5, can be used to show how art might be accorded the kind of significance which Hegel appears to deny it possesses in the modern world. In relation to the first reason, I now intend to show in more detail how Hegel's secularization of the Christian teaching that the individual as such, as the object and end of God's love, is of infinite value, implies the existence of an historical process between the moment when this idea entered consciousness and the gradual transformation of social reality into an adequate reflection of this idea. This in turn means that even if we treat the revealed religion as being essentially mythological in nature, thereby placing it in a relation of continuity with

the symbolic and classical forms of art in terms of its form, the romantic form of art can nevertheless be treated, in accordance with Hegel's original intention, as a form of art that is independent of religion, though this is true only of its later stages of development.

Hegel makes a distinction between the principle of freedom and its application;⁶⁵ and it is because he takes his theory of modern ethical life to represent the full application of the principle of freedom that he describes his system of right as 'the realm of actualized freedom',⁶⁶ while right itself is described as 'any existence [*Dasein*] in general which is the *existence* of the *free will*'.⁶⁷ Hegel's theory of modern ethical life is therefore to be viewed as an account of a set of ethical determinations (i.e. laws and institutions) in which individuals are able to gain an intuition of their freedom, in the sense that these determinations provide the conditions for the proper exercise and expression of their subjective wills, thus developing and reinforcing modern individuals' conceptions of themselves as reflective, self-determining beings. In this respect, right is to be seen as forming the objective aspect of that of which the concept of the will forms the subjective aspect, namely, human freedom. This distinction between the principle of freedom and its application invites the question as to whether the fact that the ideas of both subjective and abstract, universal freedom entered consciousness as the religious teaching that the individual as such, as the object and end of God's love, is of infinite value is essential to this principle itself, that is to say, whether the principle of freedom absolutely demands to be expressed in this form. On the one hand, it appears that for Hegel it does demand to be expressed in this form in so far as the question as to how the principle was first able to enter human consciousness is concerned. On the other hand, the possibility of the principle of freedom finding an adequate embodiment in a set of laws and social and political institutions of the kind outlined in Hegel's philosophy of right can be seen to make the ideas of subjective and universal freedom essentially independent of the religious teaching by means of which they happened to enter human consciousness. In other words, the mythical form that these ideas initially assumed may have been a reflection of the fact that the conditions and level of culture found at the time were such that people were unable to comprehend these ideas in conceptual terms and to conceive of their realization in the world. Such a view of the matter is suggested by Hegel's largely negative understanding of the Roman world, which is already to be found in his early critical writings, in which the Roman Empire is associated with the loss of political freedom and the atomization of society.⁶⁸ Hegel's assessment of the Roman world as a time of social decay is evident in his 1823 lectures

on aesthetics, when he claims that with the emergence of the Roman world 'we see the dead law prevail against beautiful ethical life', and that Roman satire accordingly deals with 'the destruction of the unity of that which is beautiful'.⁶⁹ Yet once the ideas of subjective and universal freedom had entered human consciousness, they could become historically effective, leading to the gradual transformation of society into one containing a set of laws and institutions that properly realized these ideas.

Since Hegel thinks that the conditions that led to the principle of freedom being clothed in a mythological form have been largely overcome in the modern world, the concepts of universal and subjective freedom no longer need to become an object of consciousness in this way. This does not mean, however, that the mythical form will no longer have any role to play in modern ethical life. For it may be that belief in the teaching that the individual as such, as the object and end of God's love, is of infinite value is what ultimately leads some people to view laws and institutions that accord with this teaching as legitimate, and to will the existence of these laws and institutions. Hegel himself touches upon this issue while discussing the relation of the state, with its positive laws and legal institutions, to an individual's sense of conviction, which he associates with religious inwardness. According to him, in modern times there is the tendency to treat the sphere of right and the sphere of conviction as being independent of each other, whereas they should be treated as inseparable. This is, Hegel claims, especially the case with what is called 'the people' (*das Volk*), since ultimate truth does not here take the form of thoughts and principles, so that an existing religion comes to guarantee right and ethical life.⁷⁰ The distinction Hegel makes between the principle of freedom and its application nevertheless suggests the possibility of viewing right and ethical life as being independent of religion. This point can be further illustrated with reference to Hegel's account of the will, which can be seen to offer a theory of a 'general' will. For by locating the principle of the modern state in the concept of the will, that is to say, in the basic structure of the will instantiated in each and every individual will, Hegel provides an account of a general will that does not first need to be constituted through a social contract, as it is for other representatives of the modern voluntarist tradition in political philosophy, including Rousseau; a contract in which individuals consent to limit their natural freedom and pledge to subject themselves to the same conditions that they impose on others, so as to secure their own rights.⁷¹ Hegel, by contrast, identifies the general will with that which must be held to be essential to each and every individual will prior to any act of giving one's consent.⁷² It is the general will understood in this way that for him

both genuinely unites individuals and raises the possibility of rational insight into the legitimacy of the laws and institutions of modern ethical life, which is therefore no longer to be sought in a religious teaching.

The independence that right thus gains in relation to the Christian religion and the mythological form in which it presents its content can be related specifically to Hegel's account of spirit as the universal self-consciousness of the community, which forms the final moment of his reinterpretation of the doctrine of the Trinity, because this universal self-consciousness no longer needs to be represented as being constituted by the presence of the Holy Spirit within it. In the *Encyclopaedia*, Hegel describes the universal self-consciousness of spirit as one in which each individual self-consciousness has absolute independence, while, by negating its own immediacy, this same individual self-consciousness does not distinguish itself from others but instead recognizes itself in them.⁷³ In the light of what has already been said concerning Hegel's account of the concept of the will, this characterization of the universal self-consciousness of spirit can be interpreted in the following way.

On the one hand, the negation of immediacy mentioned above is to be understood as the capacity to conceive of oneself in abstraction from all purely natural (e.g. physical features and psychological characteristics) and other merely given determinations (e.g. the fact of being born the member of a certain social group or society) that serve to distinguish one individual from another individual in a purely immediate way. As we have seen, in so far as each and every human being possesses this capacity, they are to be viewed as identical with each other, while the equality that Hegel associates with this identity provides an explanation as to how the idea that the individual as such, as the object of God's love, is of infinite value, finds expression in modern ethical life. It is in this sense that each individual self-consciousness does not distinguish itself from others but recognizes itself in them. On the other hand, despite their identity with others, persons have absolute independence in the sense that they are able to determine themselves as individuals by means of the choices they make within the sphere of freedom left open to them by others; a sphere of freedom that is ultimately guaranteed by the laws of the state, which thus help realize the second moment of the will and the idea that it is not as an anonymous mass, but in virtue of their particular, contingent individuality that human beings, as the object of God's love, are of infinite value. The way in which the concept of the will here turns out to be the unifying factor again shows how religious representational thought, this time the representation of the presence of the Holy Spirit within the community as that which holds this community together,

can be replaced by a conceptual form of knowledge. In this respect, we appear to have a similar scenario to the one with which Hegel wants to present us in the case of the relation of art to the Christian religion, where the content which art previously brought to human consciousness is held to be more adequately mediated by means of religion, so that in this sense art comes to lose its significance, though this time the transition is to a purely conceptual form of consciousness.

The way in which Hegel links the teaching that the individual as such, as the object and end of God's love, is of infinite value to the realization of freedom in the modern world, appears to support the claim that Hegel upholds the continuity of world history. He is said to do this by arguing against both the negation of tradition by the French Revolution, which is held to constitute a radical break with the past, and the negation of the new age which it ushers in undertaken by Restoration and romantic philosophy, on account of this new age's alleged godlessness and rejection of tradition.⁷⁴ Hegel can also be seen to have developed a conception of the state that avoids conceiving the latter either as having completely emancipated itself from its Christian origins or as being dependent on religion; for his philosophy attempts to exhibit the identity of the principle of the state with that of Christianity, namely, the principle of the self-consciousness of freedom, so that the same concept of freedom is understood to govern both religion and the modern state.⁷⁵ Despite this historical continuity and identity of principle, we might, however, speak of the end of mythology, in so far as religion's function of communicating ethical and religious ideas is concerned, since the religious representations found in the teachings of the Christian religion are no longer held to be absolutely essential when it comes to expressing these ideas, which can in fact now be expressed in a more adequate form.⁷⁶ The possibility of dispensing with the representation of the Holy Spirit as that which unites the community, since this unity can now be explained in terms of the concept of the will, suggests, moreover, that Strauss's 'universal individual' is not only responsible for producing the gospels but is also their real subject. This opens up the possibility of historicizing Hegel's interpretation of the Trinity in the light of the dynamic governing his lectures on aesthetics.

To begin with, in the person of the Father we have the abstract conception of the divine which the oriental religions that Hegel associates with the symbolic form of art unsuccessfully strive to present in determinate sensory forms, while Judaism alone recognizes the impossibility of doing this, so that we come to have an absolute opposition between the infinite and the finite, the divine and the human. This opposition is overcome in the Greek religion

of art and, even more so, in the Christian doctrine of the Incarnation. The humanization of the divine then becomes complete in the idea of the presence of the Holy Spirit in the Christian community, since the community itself turns out to be the real subject and object of the mythical form of consciousness that characterizes the revealed religion. Yet this becomes fully known only with the rise of the modern natural law tradition and Hegel's appropriation of this tradition, since what first entered human consciousness in mythical form now becomes explicable in purely conceptual terms, specifically, in terms of the concept of the will. The dynamic governing Hegel's lectures on aesthetics thus points to the gradual, but ineluctable, humanization of the idea of the divine; and it is precisely of such a process that Hegel himself appears to speak in the following passage from his 1823 lectures on aesthetics:

The community [*Gemeinde*] is the god that has been taken out of its immediate immersion in externality and returned into itself. The god is no longer this One . . . the unity breaks and is shattered into the indeterminate multiplicity of subjectivity. And thus instead of this content (the One) the material now becomes the subjective particularity of feelings, of actions, the diversity of the living movement of individuality with its deeds and its willing and that which it refrains from doing.⁷⁷

This passage suggests that as romantic art develops, humanity comes to form the new, quasi-religious object of art.⁷⁸ Hegel also alludes to the way in which humanity has become the object of art when he mentions the following view of the purpose of art:

. . . art should portray that which is generally human [*Menschliches*], that which comes from spirit . . . In general the purpose of art is to portray vividly that which generally exists in the human spirit [*im menschlichen Geist*], the truth that the human being has in his spirit, that which has stirred the depths of the human heart, that which has its place in the human spirit [*im Menschengeste*].⁷⁹

Although this passage can be read as being in harmony with Hegel's view of art's highest vocation as being that of communicating an ethical and religious content, he immediately comments that although the art which makes humanity into its object may represent the authentic interests of spirit, its concentration on that which is purely human, including feelings, tendencies and passions, means that it may equally contain that which is base about

the human spirit in addition to that which is of a higher value. In other words, the content of art becomes a more or less contingent affair; and for Hegel the contingency of the content of art has implications for our understanding of the role and significance of art in the modern world, as compared to its role and significance in earlier periods of history. This brings me to his claim that art, in so far as it fulfils its highest vocation, is for us a thing of the past.⁸⁰ In what follows, I intend to show how this claim needs to be understood in terms of Hegel's views on the relation of the romantic form of art to the ethical world in which it is produced.

Chapter 4

The Significance of Kierkegaard's Interpretation of *Don Giovanni* in Relation to Hegel's Theory of the 'End' of Art

1. The 'End' of Art

The idea of the 'end' of art was already a source of controversy among Hegel's students, who understood it as proclaiming the death of art, in the sense that art has in the modern world exhausted all the possibilities open to it.¹ This radical interpretation of Hegel's claim that art can no longer fulfil its highest vocation in the modern world cannot therefore simply be attributed to the problems with the edition of his lectures on aesthetics put together by H. G. Hotho. Once Hegel's thoughts on art are held to proceed from the idea of the death of art, it becomes natural to entertain the suspicion that he is not in the position to engage constructively with the art of modernity. Such suspicions are reinforced by Hegel's alleged classicism, that is to say, the way in which his lectures on aesthetics are taken to rest on the assumption that the art of classical Greece represents the highest form of art, against which all other forms and works of art must be measured. Already on the basis of Hotho's edition of the lectures it has been argued, however, that Hegel's claim that art can no longer fulfil its highest vocation in the modern world needs to be understood in the light of his views on the nature of modern society and that which it presupposes, namely, the transformation of the world brought about by Christianity through its introduction of the concept of subjectivity. Hegel's lectures on aesthetics are then seen to contain the beginnings of a positive theory of art in modern society and the modern state as shaped by Christianity. This theory is based on the idea that art fulfils the need and function of bringing to consciousness the relations in which subjectivity stands and its inner and outer world, so that the principle of modern art is to be regarded as the presentation of the concrete forms of subjectivity, and in this way art continues to express something that only it can express.²

This understanding of Hegel's claims concerning the end of art finds support in the student transcripts of the lectures, especially when they are viewed in conjunction with Hegel's views on history, because the evidence provided by them suggests a link between the way in which humanity becomes the object of art and the transformation of the world brought about by Christianity through such teachings as the doctrine that the individual as such, as the object and end of God's love, is of infinite value. This teaching was shown to be interpretable in terms of the concept of the will, which for Hegel is the principle of the modern state, and thus determines the realm of freedom, that is to say, the set of publicly known laws and various legal, social and political institutions of modern ethical life. It also directly relates to Hegel's theory of subjectivity; for he associates the latter, on the one hand, with the subject's abstract self-certainty, which stems from its awareness of its ultimate independence of, and power over, all the various determinations that it ascribes to itself, and, on the other, with freedom of choice concerning the actual ends that the subject wills.³ The term 'subjectivity' is thus used by Hegel to designate the capacities that he associates with the first and second moments of the will respectively, while these two moments are united within the individual person, or, in so far as the act of willing itself becomes the object of reflection, within the moral subject. This suggests that we do indeed need to try to understand Hegel's claim that art can no longer fulfil its highest vocation in the modern world with reference to his views on the transformation of the world initiated by the Christian religion through its introduction of the concept of subjectivity, before claiming that he denies art any potential or significance whatsoever in the modern world. This brings me to Hegel's account of the development that the romantic form of art undergoes with respect to its content.

Hegel associates romantic art closely with Christian art and he even refers to them as if they were essentially the same thing.⁴ However, as we shall shortly see, he thinks that art has become largely independent of the Christian religion in the modern world; and he accordingly speaks of both a religious sphere and a secular one in his account of the content of the romantic form of art. Hegel appears, moreover, to view these two spheres in historical terms, with the secular sphere succeeding the religious one. The connection that Hegel makes between Christianity and the romantic form of art is a reflection of the way in which he understands the latter to be, broadly speaking, Western art as it has developed since the advent of Christianity and the dissolution of the ancient world.

As previously mentioned, in the wake of the advent and increasing dominance of the Christian religion, art for Hegel is no longer the primary means

of clarifying and sustaining a common ethical and religious understanding of the world; for society now finds its ethical and religious ideas expressed in the teachings of the Christian religion, so that religion becomes independent of art and art becomes independent of religion. If we restrict ourselves to understanding the transition in question in purely cultural-historical terms, that is, without reference to the way in which the revealed religion of Christianity is, for Hegel, closer to the absolute knowing of philosophy than it is to art, his position is essentially reducible to the following claim: the advent and increasing dominance of Christianity led this religion to become the primary source of the self-understanding of a whole historical community, that is to say, the various beliefs and norms orienting its members' thoughts and actions. I have suggested, however, that the Christian religion can itself be thought to belong to the realm of myth, so that in this respect there is more continuity between it and the Greek religion of art than Hegel's theory of absolute spirit, with its tripartite structure, appears to allow. Yet the mythical character of this religion does not imply a lack of historical effectiveness, which consists in the Christian religion's transformation, through its teachings, of the norms and values governing modern ethical life, which now constitutes the totality of relations determining human actions. To this extent, it can be said that the Christian religion becomes the primary means of clarifying and sustaining a common ethical and religious understanding of the world. There nevertheless comes a point at which the ethical norms and values governing people's actions become independent of myth, in the sense that these norms and values arise from the individual's relation to the various laws and institutions of modern ethical life, whose ultimate basis is to be found in the principle of the will. Art in the modern world therefore stands under a wholly different set of historical conditions compared to those under which both classical art and earlier forms of romantic art stood. This point can be illustrated with reference to the original epic, because at this point in history the relations of ethical life had not yet developed to the point of being enshrined in positive laws, so that the sense of justice and what was the proper thing to do was present only as custom (*Sitte*).⁵ It was in fact for this very reason that the original epic came to assume the role of making these norms publicly available, enabling people to know more clearly what they were and to pass them more easily on to others. Consequently, while the original epic is universalistic in character because it communicates a common ethical and religious understanding of the world, as opposed to one that pertains only to particular individuals or groups within society, romantic art, once it has freed itself from the content of the Christian religion which previously formed its subject matter, is of a more particularistic nature.

As previously mentioned, the relation between the romantic form of art and the Christian religion was initially one that turned on the way in which the former took as its subject matter the story of redemption represented in the life of Jesus, which forms the distinctive content of this historical religion. However, in addition to portraying events from the life of Jesus, Hegel thinks that the Christian religion makes its presence felt in the romantic form of art with respect to its content in other, often less obvious, ways, and that its influence extends even to secular works of art. This is because such secular art can be understood to reflect the new principle that Christianity introduced into the world: the principle of subjective freedom. As we already know, this principle includes the right of subjective freedom, which for Hegel constitutes the essential difference between antiquity and the modern age. He also claims that it is in Christianity that this right is expressed 'in its infinity' and has thus become 'the universal and actual principle of a new form of the world', with love, the romantic, and the eternal salvation of the individual being specific shapes that this principle has assumed.⁶ Hegel thinks that the greater value accorded to the individual's particularity in the modern world finds expression in the content of the romantic form of art in various ways, which he describes in his lectures on aesthetics in the section on this form of art.

To begin with, and still in an obvious relation to the teachings of the Christian religion, it is such personal experiences as the individual's conversion to this religion and his overcoming of sin that form the content of the romantic form of art, as, for example, in paintings portraying Christian martyrs and saints. The romantic form of art then develops in a way that appears to make it independent of the teachings of Christianity, even though it remains expressive of the principle of subjective freedom, since its content becomes such themes as that of personal honour, romantic love or a sense of loyalty. In each case, the content of art relates to what are, for Hegel, essentially subjective features, which have their basis in arbitrariness and feeling, making them essentially contingent in nature, as when an individual chooses to identify his or her honour with one aspect of existence rather than another, or falls in love with a person whom he or she might never have chanced to meet, or decides to pledge his or her loyalty to one individual or cause rather than another. A further example of the way in which the principle of subjective freedom makes its presence felt in the romantic form of art concerns the increasing importance assumed by individual character, as in Shakespeare's plays.

Hegel further draws out the implications of his account of the development of the romantic form of art with respect to its content when he discusses the

romantic artist's relation to the content of his art. We have seen that the epic poet stands in a necessary relation to that which he portrays in the case of the original epic, because the latter expresses the whole set of essential relations governing the thoughts and actions of the poet himself as well as the other members of the ethical world which finds its highest expression in the original epic. In romantic art, by contrast, this necessary relation between the artist and the content of his art no longer exists because of the essentially arbitrary nature of the content, which, to varying degrees, depends on the romantic artist's freely made decision to focus on one possible object from among a whole range of others. This freedom with respect to the particular content of art can be understood as a reflection of the greater freedom, in the sense of the capacity to exercise free choice, which characterizes modern individuals; a form of freedom that is, moreover, guaranteed by the laws and institutions of the modern state. In this respect, romantic art constitutes an expression of the form of ethical life out of which it emerges, though this greater freedom at the same time means that art comes to lose its significance in relation to this form of ethical life. The distinction between the romantic artist's relation to the content of his art and the epic poet's relation to the content of his art can be illustrated further with reference to Hegel's account of the will, as indeed we might have expected, given the way in which the will forms the central principle of his theory of modern ethical life. As we have seen, the second moment of the will involves the act of resolving on one content of the will rather than another. The content that comes to form the object of the willing subject's freedom of choice is to be regarded as a contingent one because the subject could have willed something else instead, possibly the very opposite of what was actually willed. This is ultimately what Hegel thinks happens with respect to the content of the romantic form of art, which is a form of art that has ceased to play a vital role in the ethical life of a people. The romantic form of art is therefore itself an expression of the principle of subjective freedom in the shape of freedom of choice. It does not, however, involve freedom understood as autonomy, unlike the original epic, which can be viewed as involving an act of self-legislation on the part of a whole people, in the sense that the members of the historical community in question come to subject themselves to ethical norms that are equally of their own making, that is to say, products of their own mythical collective consciousness, whose content has been given an abiding and determinate form by means of the original epic.

The arbitrary nature of the content of art, and the way in which it comes to serve as a vehicle for expressing the artist's own subjectivity rather than commonly held religious and ethical ideas, not surprisingly becomes most pronounced once the romantic form of art has emancipated itself fully from

the Christian religion. For Hegel, the development of the romantic form of art reaches its logical conclusion in the writings of the humorist Jean Paul, since the material here becomes entirely subject to the ideas (*Einfälle*) of the humorist, so that no content is any longer respected but is instead employed and disarranged by the arbitrary will (*Willkür*) of the subject (i.e. the subjectivity of the humorist).⁷ The romantic form of art can therefore be seen to involve an ever weaker, in the sense of more contingent, relation between the artist and the content of his art; whereas the Greek artist, especially the epic poet, was someone who took as the content of his art the inchoate ethical and religious ideas governing Greek ethical life, and gave this content an abiding and determinate form; a content with which he himself, as a member of the historical community in question, stood in a necessary relation.

In connection with the artistic genre of 'the humorous [*das Humoristische*]', we find a claim in Hegel's 1826 lectures on aesthetics that could be interpreted as proclaiming the death of art; for he states that here art ceases and that humorous works are actually no longer works of art, with the result that we have 'the dissolution, the decay of art'.⁸ Yet this claim must be placed in its proper context, which means comparing the content of the romantic form of art to the content of classical Greek art, and in each case appreciating the different relation that exists between the artist and the content of his art. The romantic artist's relation to the content of his art is one of free choice, because art no longer performs the function of presenting the set of ethical and religious ideas that determines how a whole historical community thinks and acts. This greater freedom with respect to the content of art is thus a reflection of the different cultural and historical conditions under which the work of art stands, conditions that include the fact that the laws and institutions of the modern state serve to reinforce an individual's view of him- or herself as a free, reflective agent. Consequently, when Hegel states that in the romantic form of art there is an indifference, arbitrariness and adventure with respect to external sensory existence, with the latter gaining meaning only by means of the mind (*Gemüt*),⁹ this need not be seen as a criticism of the romantic form of art as such, but rather as a description of the way in which the latter reflects the cultural and historical conditions under which it stands, including the devaluation of the natural and material world in its relation to the world of spirit brought about by the Christian religion as well as the greater level of reflection and freedom of choice. Hegel therefore need not be seen as having in mind the dissolution of art as such, but only of art in so far as the cultural and historical conditions under which it stands in the modern world prevent it from fulfilling its highest vocation, that is to say, the function of communicating ethical and/or religious ideas more adequately

than other possible means of bringing this content to consciousness, though I shall later suggest that Hegel perhaps overstates his case.

Since the more contingent, particularistic nature of the content of the romantic form of art does not imply the end of art as such, but only its inability to fulfil its highest vocation, it is true to say that the evidence provided by the student transcripts of Hegel's lectures on aesthetics show that he never asserted that art was at an end, whether in the sense that it had become a historically uninteresting phenomenon, or that it was incapable of any further development, or that it had lost all interest for the present age.¹⁰ The role and possible significance of art in the modern world instead needs to be determined by taking into account the different cultural and historical circumstances under which it stands; and, in this respect, the extreme subjectivism that Hegel associates with the artistic genre of the humorous, and elsewhere with the Romantic form of irony developed by Friedrich Schlegel,¹¹ must be seen to constitute only one possibility among a whole range of others. The student transcripts of Hegel's lectures in fact open up the possibility of identifying works of art that are 'romantic' in Hegel's sense of the term but still have a significant role to play in modern ethical life, albeit one that does not correspond to the type of role played by art in the ethical life of ancient Greece, so that art can be viewed as remaining an indispensable, constitutive element of human culture at the same time as having humanity as its object. For example, whereas Hegel's interest in works of art with a prosaic, everyday content, such as Dutch still life or genre painting, is masked in the edition of the lectures put together by H. G. Hotho, so as to favour beautiful art whose content is of a religious nature, especially the Christian representation of God, the student transcripts of the lectures provide evidence of Hegel's interest in this type of art; in such a way, moreover, as to suggest that Hegel views our enjoyment of such art as having the potential to play a role in the formation (*Bildung*) of modern individuals, through its imparting an insight into that which is essentially human and that which is possible for human beings. More specifically, such art may play this role by communicating a form of life that is different from one's own, making it possible for modern individuals to become receptive to the world views of other cultures and times, and for one's own culture to be enriched by that which is alien to it; and in the latter case, art may even perform the critical function of making one aware of the limitations of one's own culture.¹² However, art does not here constitute the means of orienting the actions of a whole ethical community, as it did in the case of the original epic; and in this respect art must still be thought to have only a partial significance in the modern world.

In what follows, I relate Hegel's account of the opera as a distinctly modern art form, which can be viewed as an attempt on his part to determine the role and significance of art under the different cultural and historical circumstances found in the modern world, to Kierkegaard's interpretation of *Don Giovanni*. By so doing, I hope to show that the latter is of particular significance in relation to Hegel's lectures on aesthetics because it suggests that art may be thought to have the potential to transcend the limitations to which Hegel thinks it is subject in the modern world. A further attempt to do this will then be undertaken in the next chapter in relation to Hegel's remarks on the novel, another distinctly modern art form, which, I shall argue, is capable of performing the critical function of making one aware of the limitations of one's own society, even when the latter is understood in terms of Hegel's own theory of modern ethical life. In this chapter, it will be suggested that Kierkegaard appears to provide a possible counterexample to Hegel's 'end-of-art' thesis, though this is not to say that it was ever his intention to provide one. Indeed, while the idea of the end of art was already a source of controversy among Hegel's students, who understood it as proclaiming the death of art, Kierkegaard does not appear to grant the idea of the end of art any significance. He may, in fact, have been unaware of this issue altogether. Mozart's opera would, however, provide a fitting counterexample to the idea of the end of art, because for some of Hegel's students opera provided a prime example of how his personal enthusiasm for contemporary works of art seemed to belie his own ideas concerning the end of art. For instance, according to Theodor Mundt, who attended Hegel's 1826 lectures on aesthetics:

... as soon as the university bell had struck six and he [i.e. Hegel] had just finished saying that music was the art of empty dreaming, one would see the man hurry over to the opera house opposite the university, where an opera by Gluck was being performed and he would enthusiastically applaud the singer Milder. Or else he would take a carriage and drive out to the Königstadt theatre in order to hear Sontag.¹³

2. The Opera as a Modern Art Form

In his interpretation of Mozart's *Don Giovanni* in *Either/Or*, Kierkegaard, or, to be more precise, the pseudonym he refers to as A, distinguishes between the form and the content (i.e. subject matter) of the work of art. A also

considers an absolute harmony of form and content to be the mark of the classic work of art. Kierkegaard's use of a form-content distinction, and his understanding of what constitutes a classic work of art, might be seen as evidence of Hegel's influence on his thought,¹⁴ because, as we saw in Chapter 2, Hegel holds the view that an absolute unity of form and content is the mark of the classic work of art, or the ideal, as he otherwise calls it. Moreover, although Kierkegaard's understanding of Hegel's aesthetics would have been based on what must now be regarded as an unreliable source, we shall see that Kierkegaard uses the form-content distinction in a way that closely corresponds to Hegel's use of it. In this respect, Kierkegaard's account of Mozart's *Don Giovanni* as a classic work of art, the most classic of all works of art in fact, appears to be compatible with Hegel's own account of the classic work of art, in so far as the relation of form to content is concerned. Yet Mozart's opera would for Hegel belong to the sphere of romantic art, which he considers to be essentially different from the classical art of ancient Greece, in which art fulfils its highest vocation.

As previously mentioned, according to Hegel an absolute unity of content and form is possible only when that which is to be portrayed (i.e. the conceptual content) is by its very nature susceptible to the form of art. The content of the work of art must, in short, be of such a kind that it lends itself to being portrayed in sensory form, with such a perfect match of content and form being found in classical Greek art, in which the divine is presented in human form. I have suggested, however, that this conception of the classic work of art fails to do full justice to the role that Hegel considers a work of art such as the original epic to have played in the ethical life of ancient Greece. In the original epic, the unity of content and form is linked to the aesthetic presentation of ethical as well as religious ideas, and the aesthetic presentation of these ideas is held to be the most adequate and primary means of bringing them to consciousness in the historical community in question. It is important to bear this in mind because it becomes relatively easy to conceive of works of romantic art which meet the requirement of an absolute unity of form and content in the sense indicated above, so that these works would *ipso facto* have to be considered beautiful works of art; and Kierkegaard's interpretation of *Don Giovanni* will be shown to be a case in point. This does not mean, however, that these beautiful works of art are to be accorded the same kind of ethical significance as a classical Greek work of art such as the original epic.

Kierkegaard appears to accept the idea that the classic work of art requires an absolute unity of form and content when he argues that the subject matter of Mozart's opera is one that can be adequately expressed only in the

specific form of music. Given the fact that Kierkegaard's attempt to establish the classic status of *Don Giovanni* is based on an appeal to the idea that this particular work of art involves an absolute unity of form and content (i.e. subject matter), it might be asked whether Kierkegaard is in fact able to show that a romantic work of art could, by Hegel's own standards, lay claim to being as beautiful as a classical Greek work of art.

In so far as the form-content relation is concerned, Hegel's account of the ideal can be seen to involve three essential elements, all of which are to be found in Kierkegaard's interpretation of *Don Giovanni*: the form, or sensory material; the content, or conceptual element by means of which the sensory material is organized into a meaningful whole; and the formative activity of the artist, by means of which the unity of form and content is brought about. Kierkegaard points to the importance of the artist's activity when he rejects the idea that any composer, and not just Mozart, could have successfully realized the subject matter found in the story of Don Juan.¹⁵ He also offers a definition of the classic work of art which emphasizes the way in which 'the subject matter permeates the form' and 'the form permeates the subject matter'.¹⁶ This unity of subject matter and form is perfectly realized in Mozart's *Don Giovanni* because the subject matter is an intrinsically musical one, with the result that the music does not merely serve as an accompaniment to the idea found in the subject matter, but instead discloses its own innermost nature.¹⁷ The idea in question is 'the sensuous in its elemental originality', which, in virtue of its immediacy, can only be adequately presented in the medium of music.¹⁸ Kierkegaard attempts to justify this claim by arguing that Don Juan essentially hovers between being an idea and an individual, and that only a musical portrayal of him can avoid portraying him merely as a particular individual.¹⁹

It is not my intention to ask whether Kierkegaard is right to characterize Mozart's opera in this way; this matter must be decided on the basis of how convinced one is by his interpretation of *Don Giovanni*. Moreover, Kierkegaard is himself aware of the difficulties involved in his attempt to demonstrate by means of language that which, by his own admission, can be properly expressed only in the medium of music.²⁰ What is of most relevance to us is the way in which Kierkegaard's interpretation of *Don Giovanni* as a classic work of art is compatible with Hegel's account of the ideal. For, on the one hand, Kierkegaard clearly identifies form with the sensory medium by means of which the content is made present to consciousness, and, on the other hand, he identifies the content with the subject matter portrayed in the work of art; and this broadly speaking corresponds to what Hegel means by the form and the content of the work of art. The only major difference is that Kierkegaard

uses the term 'idea' to signify content, whereas for Hegel this term signifies the unity of the concept and objectivity, which, in the case of the ideal, consists in the absolute unity of form and content. Finally, Kierkegaard argues that the content of the opera in question is one that can be adequately presented only in the medium of music, so that in this respect art must be considered to be the most adequate means of bringing this content to consciousness. Although Hegel would appear to want to deny that this can be true of a work of romantic art, this idea is integral to his understanding of art in so far as it is capable of fulfilling its highest vocation.

Kierkegaard's interpretation of *Don Giovanni* thus suggests that it is possible for romantic works of art to exhibit an essential feature of the ideal, namely, an absolute unity of form and content. Although this absolute unity of form and content is for Hegel a necessary condition that any work of art must meet in order to qualify as a counterexample to his end-of-art thesis, it is not a sufficient one; for he views art as fulfilling its highest vocation only when it is also the primary and most adequate means of communicating ethical and religious ideas which orient the thoughts and actions of the members of a whole historical community. I shall argue below, however, that even when this point is taken into consideration, there are still grounds for thinking that Kierkegaard's interpretation of *Don Giovanni* appears to provide a counterexample to Hegel's claim that art, in so far as it is able to fulfil its highest vocation, is for us a thing of the past.

As we have seen, Hegel thinks that classical Greek art, especially the original epic, cannot be viewed in isolation from the common ethical and religious consciousness out of which it emerges, while this ethical and religious consciousness cannot itself be viewed in isolation from the work of art which clarifies and renders objective the community's understanding of the divine and the ethical. The reciprocal relation that existed between the work of art and the collective ethical and religious consciousness out of which it emerges in the ancient Greek world was weakened, however, with the advent of the Christian religion, because the latter brought the divine to consciousness in a superior way, making this content independent of art, reducing art to portraying a content that could be more adequately expressed in the form of religious doctrine. Consequently, even when art has a substantial content, that is to say, one that derives from the doctrines and teachings of the Christian religion, it is, unlike the classical Greek work of art, no longer to be seen as the most adequate and primary means of bringing this content to human consciousness. Although I have expressed doubts about whether Hegel succeeds in explaining the transition from art to religion in terms of a difference of form, this transition can be explained

in terms of a difference in content, since the Christian religion introduces an essentially different ethical and religious viewpoint and corresponding form of ethical life into the world. Consequently, even if a work of romantic art may be shown to exhibit an absolute unity of form and content, as Kierkegaard claims to be the case with Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, it would still not count as a counterexample to Hegel's end-of-art thesis, unless we could also show that the work in question has universal significance because it is the highest possible expression of certain ethical and/or religious ideas that determine the ethical life of a whole historical community. This would need to be done, moreover, in a way that does justice to the idea that the function and significance of art will vary depending on the cultural and historical circumstances under which it stands. In short, if we are going to provide a counterexample to Hegel's end-of-art thesis, we need to demonstrate how a romantic work of art can be thought to have the same universal significance as classical Greek art despite the different cultural and historical conditions under which it stands. In what follows, I show how Kierkegaard's interpretation of *Don Giovanni* comes close to providing a possible counterexample to Hegel's end-of-art thesis, even when the demand that a work of art should have the kind of universal significance mentioned above is introduced together with the demand that the ideal should exhibit an absolute unity of form and content. First, however, I intend to introduce Annemarie Gethmann-Siefert's account of Hegel's understanding of the function performed by the opera in the modern world, since this suggests that Hegel himself denies that the opera has the potential to qualify as art that fulfils its highest vocation, though he does not deny it any significance whatsoever.

Gethmann-Siefert draws attention to the fact that, in his lectures on aesthetics, Hegel discusses the opera in connection with his reflections on the nature of modern drama, and, in particular, in connection with the way in which the opera stands opposed to the type of drama represented by the works of Schiller. The opposition in question can be characterized both as one between beautiful and socially relevant art and as one between enjoyment and reflection, with the opera being an example of beautiful art that is enjoyable and the modern drama providing an example of socially relevant art that stimulates reflection.²¹ The opera is beautiful because for Hegel it is a *Gesamtkunstwerk*, in which all the other arts (i.e. music, dance, drama, and, in the case of the set, painting) are united into a complete whole,²² while the interplay of text and music can be seen to constitute a unity of form and content.²³ However, since the aim of the opera is enjoyment, this formal, technical and artistic perfection is linked to an insignificant subject matter,

one that is insubstantial and largely a matter of indifference, especially when compared to the ethical and religious content of ancient drama,²⁴ and, we might add, the original epic. Hegel himself acknowledges that opera is often regarded as something extravagant and unimportant; yet he argues that this art form demands the pomp and the fairy tale-like or mythological content that characterizes it.²⁵ In this respect, the content of the opera is not to be seen as a matter of complete indifference: for its aim dictates that its subject matter should address itself more to the heart and imagination than to the understanding, and that it should deal with subjects that are remote in space and time, since part of the opera's function is to remove us from the world which is ours and its relations.²⁶ The fact that the subject matter of an opera needs to be of an escapist kind is, in fact, what makes subject matter taken from the ancient world, which is otherwise alien to modern individuals, highly suitable for an opera.²⁷ The opera therefore provides an example of how art can be seen to perform a particular function in the modern world, that of providing enjoyment and allowing one to escape the social world of which one is a member, even though it is no longer in the position to fulfil its highest vocation.

While the content of the opera is an insubstantial one, Schiller's dramas have a substantial content but are no longer beautiful in their mode of presentation; and, rather than aiming at enjoyment, as the opera does, they demand instead that we reflect on their content.²⁸ We thus appear to have two contrasting art forms: one that is beautiful, in the sense of exhibiting a certain formal perfection and harmony, and whose aim is enjoyment, and one that is 'lofty' with respect to its content, and whose aim is to stimulate reflection on its substantial subject matter. For this reason, it might be said that although Hegel allows that aesthetic enjoyment may coexist alongside a reflective attitude that is awakened by works of art, he does not appear to think that a new synthesis of a substantial content and an intersubjective agreement based on a feeling of pleasure is possible in the modern world.²⁹ In other words, Hegel is highly sceptical concerning the possibility of a modern work of art which, like the classical Greek work of art, exhibits an absolute unity of form and content and has universal significance on account of its ethical and religious function within the historical community out of which it arises.

Gethmann-Siefert's interpretation of Hegel's views on the opera as a distinctly modern art form, and the way in which it can be contrasted with the modern drama, as represented by the works of Schiller, is compatible with the idea of the 'end' of art, in so far as such an idea can be attributed to Hegel, because Gethmann-Siefert does not consider what is beautiful to be

united with that which is substantial and of a higher interest in a single work of art. The beautiful and the substantial instead belong to two separate art forms, the opera and the modern drama respectively, whereas in the classical Greek work of art they are combined in single works of art. Kierkegaard's interpretation of *Don Giovanni* is of particular interest in this respect because he suggests that an opera may have a substantial content as well as its exhibiting an absolute unity of content and form, and he thus appears to raise the possibility of viewing what is beautiful and what is substantial as being combined in a single work of art. In what sense, then, is the content of Mozart's opera a substantial one, as well as being one that makes possible an absolute unity of content and form in virtue of its intrinsic musicality, so that, contrary to Gethmann-Siefert's account of Hegel's views on the opera as a distinctly modern art form, we would appear to have an opera whose content is neither an indifferent nor an insubstantial one?

We have already seen that the subject matter of *Don Giovanni* is for Kierkegaard 'the sensuous in its elemental originality', or, in more general terms, sensuality as such. Kierkegaard makes the point that sensuality was first posited as a principle by Christianity, in the sense that sensuality must be viewed as an essentially negative principle in relation to the positive principle that Christianity introduced into the world, namely, spirit.³⁰ In other words, although sensuality existed prior to the emergence of Christianity, it was only through the teachings of this historical religion that sensuality first became problematic, that is to say, something that was to be excluded from the world. Kierkegaard then associates the figure of Don Juan with the Middle Ages, in which the discord between the flesh and spirit that Christianity brought into the world becomes the subject of reflection. By this he means that, as was typical of the Middle Ages, an aspect of life would be represented by a particular individual, with, in this case, Don Juan representing 'the incarnation of the flesh'.³¹ Don Juan is, in short, the embodiment of the principle of sensuality which Christianity posits by seeking to exclude it from the world, so that the principle of sensuality has in this way come to assume a determinate shape, which allows it to be more easily grasped by the common ethical and religious consciousness.

The fact that sensuality is negatively defined as that which Christianity seeks to exclude from the world means that although it is a principle that stands in an essential relation to the Christian religion, it does not itself, strictly speaking, form part of the content of this religion; it is instead something that the latter seeks to exclude from the world. The relation thus appears to be a negative one that arises with the opposition between interiority and the natural world which forms an essential part of the Christian

viewpoint; and in his lectures on aesthetics, Hegel describes this view of the world as belonging to a sphere of beauty that is higher than the beauty found in the classical world, namely, a spiritual beauty which is in a condition of rupture and separation in relation to that which is external to it.³² The negative character of the relation of the content of Mozart's opera to the principles governing modern ethical life, as shaped by the teachings of the Christian religion, can be further illustrated with reference to Hegel's theory of the will. As we have seen, Hegel's account of the various moments of the concept of the will is designed to provide a purely conceptual explanation of subjectivity's essentially self-determining character. In this respect, the principle of the will stands firmly opposed to the principle of sensuality, which involves being determined by natural necessity alone, so that once again sensuality is to be seen as standing in an essentially negative relation to the principles governing modern ethical life. Hegel thinks that sensuality is made more ethical by means of the institution of marriage, in which the natural drive is reduced to a passing and insubstantial moment while the spiritual bond linking the marriage partners proves to be the substantial factor.³³ The institution of marriage might be thought, however, to accommodate the principle of sensuality by suppressing it, so that in this respect the principle in question is still to be understood as something that is to be excluded, though not entirely so, from modern ethical life, as shaped by the Christian religion.

The essential, but negatively defined, nature of the relation of the content of Mozart's opera to the Christian religion is highly significant because it implies that Hegel would have to grant that this content is a substantial one, since, apart from philosophy, the Christian religion is for him the highest form in which the truth can be present to human consciousness. Yet, as previously mentioned, Hegel thinks that Christian art, whose subject matter is drawn directly from the doctrines and teachings of the Christian religion, has a largely inessential role to play, because it is reduced to portraying a content which is more adequately expressed in religious doctrine. According to Kierkegaard, by contrast, the content of Mozart's opera (i.e. sensuality as such) is one that demands to be expressed in the form of intuition, because the sensuous in its elemental originality, as represented by the figure of Don Juan, can only be adequately presented in the medium of music on account of its immediacy; and this content is one that stands in only an indirect relation to the Christian religion, because it is something that the latter seeks to exclude from the world. The subject matter of Mozart's opera is therefore an intrinsically musical one and one that does not, strictly speaking, form part of the content of the Christian religion while standing in an essential relation to the latter, so that Hegel would

have to view this content as a substantial one, in the sense that it is both ethically and religiously significant, though in a negative sense. Kierkegaard's interpretation of *Don Giovanni* thus appears to suggest the possibility of a romantic work of art that exhibits another essential feature of the ideal in addition to an absolute unity of form and content, namely, a substantial content that can be adequately portrayed only in the form of art.

From what has been said above, Kierkegaard's interpretation of *Don Giovanni* can be seen to attribute to this particular work of art features which are all essential to Hegel's account of the ideal: (1) an absolute unity of form and content, which, in the case of *Don Giovanni*, is made possible by the subject matter's intrinsic musicality; (2) the impossibility of portraying this content more adequately in a form other than the form of art; an impossibility which, in the case of Mozart's opera, stems from the fact that its subject matter is an intrinsically musical one that stands in an essential, but indirect relation to the doctrines and teachings of the Christian religion; and (3) an ethically and religiously significant content, whose significance derives from its relation to the Christian religion, though the relation in question is a purely negative one. Does this mean that Kierkegaard's interpretation of *Don Giovanni* provides a counterexample to Hegel's end-of-art thesis?

We can, I think, ultimately deny that it does because of the purely negative character of the relation of the content of Mozart's opera, the principle of sensuality, to the Christian religion. As we have seen, Hegel's views on the original epic suggest that he understands the classical Greek work of art to represent the highest form in which it was possible, at this stage in human history, to communicate an ethical and religious understanding of the world, with this understanding of the world orienting the thoughts and actions of all the members of the historical community out of which this work of art itself arose. A particular example of the way in which art performed this function is to be found in the original epic's presentation of the gods and heroes of Greek mythology, since its portrayal of their actions and deeds can be seen as the source of ethical values, in the sense that the Greeks considered these actions and deeds to be exemplary actions which one should strive to emulate. Moreover, the epic presentation of the gods and heroes of Greek mythology provided a determinate and abiding representation of the values in question, thus allowing them to be more easily taught and passed on to others. As the source of the ethical norms and values governing Greek society, the content of the classical work of art must be seen as having a positive significance in relation to the ethical world to which it belongs.

In contrast, the subject matter of Mozart's opera relates to a content that is to be excluded from the world according to the teachings of the Christian

religion, which for Hegel replaces the Greek religion of art both as the means by which the divine is brought to human consciousness and as the source of the norms orienting human actions. Nevertheless, even if Kierkegaard's interpretation of *Don Giovanni* cannot for this reason be said to provide a counterexample to Hegel's end-of-art thesis, it can be said to provide a possible counterexample to one of the main ideas concerning the opera as a modern art form that can be attributed to Hegel: the idea that the opera is, by its very nature, an art form in which that which is beautiful and that which is ethically and/or religiously significant are not to be found combined in a single work of art, because the aim of the opera (i.e. enjoyment) dictates that its subject matter should be an insubstantial one.

While Kierkegaard's interpretation of *Don Giovanni* shows that it is possible to interpret works of art later than those of classical Greece as approximating to the ideal, in which art fulfils its highest vocation, even though they cannot fully realize this vocation on account of the different cultural and historical circumstances under which they stand, in the next chapter I show how great this approximation to the ideal can be. I shall do this in connection with an art form whose potential Hegel was not himself in a position fully to appreciate, because it underwent further development after his death. Although for this reason Hegel cannot be blamed for failing to appreciate this art form's potential in relation to his own project of understanding the function and significance of art under different cultural and historical circumstances, he does mention it in his lectures on aesthetics and makes some remarks that can be seen to anticipate some further developments that this art form underwent. The art form in question is the novel, which I discuss in relation to a problem that Hegel himself formulates, namely, the problem as to the nature and possibility of a modern epic.

Chapter 5

Hegel and Lukács on the Possibility of a Modern Epic

1. The Problem of the Modern Epic

According to Dieter Henrich, although Hegel thought that we cannot hope for the epic of the modern world of which Georg Lukács later spoke in his theory of the novel, he nevertheless allowed for the possibility of ‘an art of intimacy’. Henrich characterizes this form of art as Biedermeier art, and as one that ‘playfully introduces into the peripheral, into the incidental, the certainty that the world cannot ultimately be characterized by rupture and estrangement’.¹ Henrich claims, however, that the potential, albeit limited one, that Hegel thus accords to art in modernity represents an accommodation on his part to the development of art during his years in Berlin, whereas he should have condemned ‘all the artistic production of his time as the decaying remnants of art itself’, since this position represents the only consistent view of the future of art, given the systematic structure of his aesthetics.² While the last claim must be seen as problematic because the systematic structure of Hegel’s lectures on aesthetics can be largely attributed to the editorial interventions of their first editor, H. G. Hotho, we find some evidence to support the claim that Hegel allowed for the possibility of ‘an art of intimacy’ in the student transcripts of these lectures. For Hegel himself stresses that the everyday has come to form an essential aspect of art, so that the range of its objects has become unlimited.³ One example that he gives of the way in which the everyday has come to form the object of art is Dutch painting, with its scenes from private life and its portrayal with amazing skill of such objects as clothes, flowers, utensils and glass, so that the artist comes to impart to these objects an interest which they in themselves lack. Hegel links this concentration on the everyday to the ethical life of the historical community in which these works of art were produced; for he associates the feeling of contentment (*Behaglichkeit*)

which Dutch art evinces with the sense of pride that the citizens of the Dutch nation had come to experience after freeing themselves from Spanish domination.⁴ This suggests that Hegel does not regard art's growing preoccupation with the prosaic as necessarily being a sign of art's detachment from the ethical life of the nation in which it is produced. Indeed, in the case of Dutch painting, this growing preoccupation with the everyday is a reflection of the political and religious independence that the Dutch nation had won for itself.

On the other hand, Hegel does not mean to suggest that the art of modernity, which stands under entirely different cultural and historical conditions to those of classical Greek art, may perform the same function within the ethical life of a people as that performed by a work of art such as the original epic. This corresponds, broadly speaking, to Lukács's position in *The Theory of the Novel*, in which he describes the age of the epic as a time in which the self and the world are in harmony with each other, so that the self finds itself at home in its world; whereas this is not the case with the novel, whose hero is 'the product of estrangement from the outside world'.⁵ While this last claim runs counter to the idea of 'an art of intimacy', which gives rise to 'the certainty that the world cannot ultimately be characterized by rupture and estrangement', I argue in what follows that Hegel's scattered and brief remarks on the novel found in the student transcripts of his lectures on aesthetics are compatible with Lukács's position, which suggests that the modern world can be characterized by rupture and estrangement. This will also lead me to argue against the idea that for the sake of consistency Hegel should have condemned the art of his own time as the decaying remnants of art itself, by showing, with reference to the kind of modern epic of which Lukács spoke in his later writings on the classic European realist tradition, that an essential relation between art and ethical life can be established on the basis of Hegel's remarks on the modern epic, the novel, whose background is modern ethical life. This relation must be conceived differently, however, from the one found in the ethical life of ancient Greece because of the changed historical conditions that characterize modern ethical life, as it is presented in Hegel's own philosophy of right; conditions that, I argue, make rupture and estrangement into an appropriate object of art.

It is nevertheless easy to understand why Hegel might be viewed as rejecting the idea of an epic of the modern world and as reducing the potential of art to 'an art of intimacy' when we compare his views on classical Greek art to his views on the romantic form of art, to which an epic of the modern world would belong. For rather than communicating ethical and religious

ideas in the way that the original (i.e. Homeric) epic does, the content of the romantic form of art is said to be 'particular individuality', and this is itself said to be of an arbitrary and contingent nature.⁶ Moreover, the novel, which Hegel himself refers to as our modern epic,⁷ is described as being primarily concerned with the kind of 'external common actuality' and 'the ordinary prose of everyday life' which, in Hegel's view, should be dispensed with, and abstracted from, in a work of art.⁸

In this respect, although Lukács acknowledges his debt to Hegel in *The Theory of the Novel*,⁹ it appears difficult to see how this influence can be thought to extend to Lukács's account of the modern novel, as developed in his later works on the classic European realist tradition, in which such nineteenth-century realists as Balzac and Tolstoy are accorded the same status as the ancient Greeks because of the 'adequate pictures of great periods of human development' they give us.¹⁰ I intend to argue, however, that Hegel's other remarks on the novel are compatible with some of the central features of Lukács's account of the classic European realist tradition, as exemplified by his essay on Balzac's *Illusions perdues*, a novel first published several years after Hegel's death. This compatibility becomes evident when we place Hegel's remarks on the novel in their proper context, which means understanding them in relation to his theory of modern ethical life, as presented in his philosophy of right; and by relating Hegel's remarks on the modern epic to his own social and political thought, I aim to avoid introducing any assumptions that he would himself reject. My main argument will be that Hegel could have accorded the novel the function of presenting some of the essential features of modern ethical life, in contradistinction to earlier forms of ethical life, in their relation to that which is purely contingent, and which must therefore be thought to lie outside a philosophical doctrine of right. This will in turn show that a world partly characterized by rupture and estrangement constitutes an appropriate content for the modern epic, given the historical conditions under which the latter stands, conditions which art has the potential to reflect in its own distinctive manner. In this way, art can be seen to have a significant role to play in modern ethical life, including its making the limitations of one's social world into the object of a reflective form of consciousness, though this is not to say that Hegel himself accorded art this role. Hegel's theory of modern ethical life has, in fact, been taken to involve an attempt on his part to reconcile modern, reflective individuals to their social world by showing them that it is a home.¹¹ This aspiration to reconcile individuals to their social world by showing them that it is a home even finds expression in Hegel's lectures on aesthetics, in which it is claimed that human beings must be at home in the world.¹²

The compatibility of some of Hegel's remarks on the novel with Lukács's interpretation of Balzac's *Illusions perdues* will be seen to point to the limited extent to which Hegel is able to realize the project of showing how modern individuals can think of themselves as being at home in their world, that is to say, in the modern form of ethical life.

In his 1823 lectures on aesthetics, Hegel describes the novel in the following way:

The novel has a foundation, where the main moments of ethical life [*Sittlichkeit*] are fixed, where ethical life no longer rests on arbitrariness [*Willkür*], whose range [of activity] is now small. This meagre range [of activity] is that of the particular interests of an individual in general, the standpoint which individuals adopt in the world.¹³

Although the second sentence suggests that the content of the novel is the particular individuality which for Hegel typically forms the content of romantic art, the first sentence states that the individual's actions are nevertheless subject to certain constraints that stem from the fixed moments of ethical life, that is to say, the various laws and institutions which make up Hegel's theory of modern ethical life. A character in a novel set in the modern world will consequently be confronted with a world made up of fixed legal, social and political structures that determine his or her thoughts and actions. These structures cannot, however, completely determine an individual's thoughts and actions, since freedom of choice is, for Hegel, integral to the concept of the will, which forms the basic principle of right. In certain cases, as with laws designed to guarantee personal freedom, the determinations of modern ethical life in fact serve to protect an individual's right to exercise free choice. It is therefore only in so far as the relations deriving from the structures of modern ethical life do not determine an individual's activity that an individual's own subjectivity is all that remains, thereby preventing the individual in question from being a hero of epic literature.¹⁴

The way in which Hegel situates the individual within the framework of the various determinations governing modern ethical life finds its corresponding expression in his lectures on aesthetics in the following claim: 'To the subject belongs a surrounding world . . . This world is not a contingent one, but an internally coherent interconnected totality. Human beings must be portrayed in relation to it, because they stand in this relation.'¹⁵ We here have, on the one hand, human thoughts and actions as determined by the legal, social and political structures that confront individuals

in the modern world, and, on the other hand, human thoughts and actions as left undetermined by the various relations that arise in connection with these structures. In what follows, I argue that the connection between the legal, social and political relations determining human thought and action and human thought and action as left undetermined by these relations suggested by Hegel's remarks on the novel is one that allows us to treat the content of the latter as something that is not merely contingent and subjective. Moreover, Hegel claims that the human dimension (*das Menschliche*) is the most interesting thing in the case of the novel,¹⁶ so that this art form also serves as an example of how the humanization of art need not result in subjectivism. Indeed, Hegel's remarks on the novel suggest that he has good reasons for not thinking that the increasingly prosaic nature of the content of art is a sign of art's decay, but for holding it instead to be the reflection of the historical conditions under which it stands, and, as such, a corrective to certain subjectivist tendencies found in the romantic form of art. When discussing Goethe's novel *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*, Hegel in fact mentions the prosaic nature of the content that enters into this novel, and then immediately describes the novel as a 'correction of the fantastical [*Korrektion des Phantastischen*]'.¹⁷

Hegel also points to the possibility of a modern work of art in which a relation exists between a historically significant situation, which determines human thought and action, and the other, more subjective features of human existence in his remarks on Goethe's *Hermann und Dorothea*, when he claims that this work has as its background something of world-historical interest, so that particularity is related to something higher.¹⁸ Hegel is here referring to the way in which the work in question portrays the confused situation that arose in the wake of the French Revolution in so far as it affects the inhabitants of a provincial German town. He speaks, however, of a leap when it comes to the connection between the actions portrayed in this work of art and the historically significant events that form its background.¹⁹ In what follows, I show that the essential relation between the individual and his or her social world and the historical forces shaping it hinted at in Hegel's remarks on *Hermann und Dorothea* can be presented in such a way as to avoid this alleged leap. A theory as to how this is possible is to be found in Lukács's interpretation of Balzac's novel *Illusions perdues*, which is in harmony with certain central features of Hegel's thought, so that the socio-logical approach Lukács adopts can be seen as compatible with Hegel's own standpoint.

Although Hegel acknowledges that an essential relation exists between an individual and the world in which he or she finds him- or herself, and

thereby suggests that his remarks on the novel need to be read in the light of his theory of modern ethical life, he himself fails to develop this point largely because he regards a condition halfway between the state of nature and fully developed civil life as the one that is best suited to art.²⁰ This view of the condition best suited to art relates to Hegel's understanding of the content of classical Greek art, especially the original epic, which he regards as being set in a pre-legal age; one that is not, however, the state of nature in its most primitive form, but is instead a condition in which individuals have learnt to cooperate with others whom they consider to be their equals, and have become willing to place themselves under the command of a single leader (e.g. Agamemnon, leader of the expedition against Troy in the case of the *Iliad*).²¹ Modern ethical life, by contrast, consists of a set of objectively valid laws and social and political institutions. This leads Hegel to limit the significance that can be accorded to the actions performed by the characters in a novel, who are subject to a set of pre-existing norms that largely determine their actions, so that the ideal here becomes, for example, that of an honest man or a paterfamilias, whose individual actions are restricted to the area of activity which still lies open to his arbitrary will.²² Consequently, in a condition such as ours, individuals are 'everywhere dependent and restricted by their passions, by arbitrariness [*Willkür*], which is legally justified and has behind it the invincible power of the civil order'.²³ In other words, when these individuals' actions are not being determined by the laws and institutions of the modern state, they are determined by their passions and their particular, contingent ends, while the right to experience the satisfaction of one's particularity through the exercise of free choice is guaranteed by the laws and institutions of the modern state.

Hegel's views on the type of condition that is most suitable for a work of art can be seen to relate to his views on the essential differences between the ethical life of ancient Greece and modern ethical life. This essential difference concerns the sources of the ethical norms which orient an individual's actions. In the case of Greek ethical life, the source of these norms is largely to be found in the portrayal of the characters and deeds of the gods and heroes of Greek mythology. One example of how the norms governing ancient Greek ethical life are held by Hegel to derive from the exemplary actions performed by certain extraordinary individuals is to be found in his claim that in the absence of proper laws and institutions, the performance of ethical actions comes to depend entirely on individual character, that is, 'the distinctive genius' of a figure such as Hercules.²⁴ Hegel consequently claims that in such a condition that which is substantial is still confined to individuals, with the subjective, arbitrary will of the individual determining

whether something is right or not.²⁵ The actions of a mythological hero such as Hercules then give rise to the desire to emulate them, so that the source of the ethical norms determining an individual's actions comes to be the wish to do the same as that which a heroic figure, who is credited with being a model of virtue, would do in the same circumstances.

The situation is of an entirely different kind when an individual is confronted with an established set of ethical laws and institutions, since the source of the norms orienting his or her actions are then these same laws and institutions in their relation to his or her individual will. Hegel consequently thinks that a distinction can be already made between the virtue (*ἀρετή*) of a figure such as Hercules and Roman *virtus*, because for the Roman his city was already present as something that was ethically valid independently of him, so that the state constituted an end to which individuals had to subject themselves.²⁶ Similarly, in modern ethical life, as described in Hegel's own philosophy of right, an individual's actions are no longer to be seen as oriented by the wish to emulate certain extraordinary individuals; they are instead determined by the need to obey publicly known laws and to comply with given regulations, and by the various duties associated with one's social roles (e.g. that of a parent and the practitioner of a trade or profession).²⁷ Hegel consequently calls the modern form of virtue 'rectitude', which he describes as being 'nothing more than the simple adequacy of the individual to the duties of the circumstances [*Verhältnisse*] to which he belongs'.²⁸ The transition from a virtue ethics based on the idea of emulation to a theory of duties based on the idea of acting in conformity with established laws and institutions for Hegel has some important implications when it comes to determining the significance of art in so far as the modern world forms its background; for, as suggested above, far less ethical significance is to be attached to an individual's actions as portrayed in a work of art such as the novel because these actions cannot be seen as giving rise to ethical norms. Individuals can instead only be portrayed acting in accordance with pre-established norms or demonstrating their own powerlessness and ineffectiveness in relation to them through their unsuccessful attempts to violate these norms or transform them in accordance with their own ideals.²⁹

The problems that Hegel raises regarding the significance that can be accorded to the actions portrayed in a work of art set in the modern world invite the question as to whether the conditions of the latter are unfavourable to the creation of epic literature, in the sense that social reality might constitute an unsuitable background and context for actions worthy of forming the content of this type of literature. This represents a common

theme in the thought of Hegel and Lukács. The latter in fact describes the issue in question as 'the central problem of style confronting the modern *bourgeois* novel', and he accordingly credits Hegel with having had an awareness of this problem.³⁰ On the other hand, Hegel's demand that individuals should be portrayed in relation to the interconnected totality that constitutes their social world points to the need for a work of art that portrays modern individuals in relation to this world, even though he himself appears to think that modern ethical life provides an unsuitable background for a work of epic literature. By pursuing this idea, I show that Lukács's interpretation of Balzac's *Illusions perdues*, when related to Hegel's social and political thought as outlined in his philosophy of right, suggests that Hegel could have acknowledged that the novel has the potential to present successfully the essential relation existing between the legal, social and political structures that determine an individual's thoughts and actions in modern ethical life and this same individual's existence as not fully determined by these structures; a relation of which, as we have seen, Hegel himself speaks in his lectures on aesthetics in connection with the novel. In this respect, the conditions of the modern world need not be viewed as entirely unfavourable to the creation of epic literature, despite the significant differences between the modern epic, the novel, and its ancient Greek counterpart. Indeed, I shall argue that the novel can be seen to fulfil a number of the essential functions that Hegel attributes to the original epic. In order to do this, I first need to determine more fully what would be the most appropriate background to the modern epic if it is to be seen to perform a similar function to the original epic. This will be done in two stages, the first of which involves determining the modern epic's general historical background, while the second relates this background specifically to Hegel's remarks on the novel. At both stages, Lukács's views on the significance of Balzac's novels, particularly *Illusions perdues*, will be seen to provide the key to establishing the possibility of a modern epic that retains at least some of the essential features of the original epic, despite the different cultural and historical conditions under which it stands.

2. The Modern Epic and History

Lukács claims that Balzac's novels show how the growing forces of capitalism continued to determine the Restoration period to which the author himself belonged, while revealing the contradiction between these forces and the attempt to restore a feudal-absolutist type of society.³¹ According to

Lukács, Balzac thus succeeded in portraying the process whereby the historical forces of capitalism inexorably came to shape contemporary society and determine its character, making us into the witnesses of the coming into being of a particular kind of social world, whereas later writers accepted this world as an accomplished fact.³² Balzac does this by bringing into relief certain features of this emerging social world that make it into one that is essentially different from all earlier forms of society. Balzac's portrayal of the relation of the old town of Angoulême to its suburb, L'Houmeau, in the first part of *Illusions perdues*, provides, I believe, a good example of what Lukács may have had in mind when he claims that Balzac is to be seen as revealing the contradiction between the forces of capitalism and the attempt to restore a feudal-absolutist type of society, though he does not himself use this example.

Given its geographical position, high on a rock overlooking the lands through which the river Charente flows, Angoulême was an important town during the religious wars in France, whereas Balzac describes its position as now constituting its weakness, since it prevents the town from expanding to the banks of the Charente. L'Houmeau, by contrast, lies next to the river and along the main road from Paris to Bordeaux. It therefore provides a far more suitable location for trade and commerce, and has consequently expanded rapidly to become a rich industrial town and the envy of Angoulême, where the local government, bishop's palace, the law court and the aristocracy all remain; so that an opposition has arisen between trade and money, on the one hand, and the nobility and power, on the other.³³ This opposition, and the resulting tension between two different social worlds, may be characterized in more general terms as one between modernity, shaped by the idea of self-determination, and tradition, which is determined by nature (i.e. the fact of being born the member of a certain social group, together with the privileges which have been held in the past to derive from this accident of birth). If we now turn to Hegel's philosophy of right, it becomes possible to identify more closely both the reason that an opposition and tension must be thought to exist between these two social worlds, and the reason that their coexistence in France after the French Revolution must be thought to involve a contradiction.

As we have already seen, in his account of civil society Hegel speaks of the 'universal' person, who is identical with all other such persons in the sense that all the merely natural and given determinations that make human beings into the particular individuals that they are have been abstracted from. This abstraction from any given content in turn allows the concept of personality to be associated with the idea of equality, of which equality

before the law, the absence of privileges deriving from the circumstances of one's birth and the right of each and every person to own property are particular expressions. On the basis of the principle of equality, Hegel argues, for example, that the functions and the powers of the state cannot be private property, as would be the case if certain offices could be inherited or sold, practices that were not uncommon in Europe both before and after the French Revolution.³⁴ These functions and powers must instead be open to all. Consequently, although the abstract conception of freedom which Hegel associates with the French Revolution needed in his view to be supplemented by an account of a determinate set of laws and institutions of the kind found in his theory of modern ethical life, he can be thought to regard the levelling process which the Revolution brought about as an historically necessary one. In this respect, the social divide between the two towns in Balzac's novel appears to be at odds with the true spirit of the age, especially given the sense of social superiority that Balzac describes the inhabitants of Angoulême, where the members of the nobility reside, as exhibiting towards the inhabitants of L'Houmeau, the place of trade and commerce, and which he claims has been reinforced by the Restoration.³⁵ Given Hegel's position on the issue of equality, the inhabitants of L'Houmeau would appear to have history on their side.

It is questionable, however, whether the tensions resulting from the opposition between these two distinct social worlds, one of which is determined by nature and tradition, while the other is characterized by its modernity, are resolved in Hegel's philosophy of right. For even though the transformations wrought by the French Revolution, such as the abolition of privileges stemming from the circumstances of one's birth, may represent the kind of emancipation from nature and all that is merely given demanded by Hegel's understanding of his system of right as the realm of actualized freedom, Hegel himself introduces into this system determinations of right that appear to be at odds with this conception of right. For instance, the idea that nature should not be a determining factor in modern ethical life beyond the confines of the family, which is the natural form of ethical life, sits uncomfortably with the way in which Hegel gives the landed nobility an important role to play in the legislature, claiming that its members are best equipped for its political role of bringing about harmony within the legislature by reconciling the interests of civil society, as represented by the deputies of the estate of trade and industry, with the universal interest of the state as a whole, which is the concern of the executive power (i.e. the state bureaucracy).³⁶ By assigning the nobility a vital political role in modern ethical life, Hegel appears to make nature,

in the form of the brute fact of the particular circumstances of an individual's birth, into a determining factor within the political state, contrary to his own understanding of the dynamic governing world history, which involves the increasing subordination of nature to freedom. Whereas the estate of trade and industry, which comprises the branches of craftsmanship, manufacture and commerce,³⁷ and can thus be identified with the modern element represented in Balzac's novel by the inhabitants of L'Houmeau, is sidelined politically, with its interests having to be mediated by the landed nobility, so as to reconcile them with the universal interest that is the concern of the political state.

Hegel admittedly seeks to justify his account of the role played by the landed nobility in modern ethical life by demonstrating the necessity of this institution, and he needs to do this because he himself distinguishes between a philosophical justification of right and a historical justification of laws and social and political institutions.³⁸ In the latter case, a law or institution is shown to have been necessary given the particular historical circumstances in which it arose. Hegel points out, however, that while a law or institution may have had an essential function to perform in the historical community in which it arose, this same law or institution may in different cultural and historical conditions turn out to have lost its meaning and consequently its right to exist. A philosophical doctrine of right, by contrast, must aim to identify that which can be held to be universally valid irrespective of its historical origin. A historical justification of a law or institution and a philosophical one can therefore differ because laws and institutions which can be justified on the grounds of the function they perform in a particular historical community might, when considered from the standpoint of a philosophical doctrine of right, be shown to be inherently unjust.

One problem with Hegel's attempt to demonstrate the necessity of the landed nobility is that he tends to introduce reasons that appear to fall short of demonstrating the necessity of this institution. Hegel argues, for example, that the landed nobility is better equipped for its role in the legislature on the grounds that its resources are both more secure than the wealth of those people involved in trade and industry and independent of the resources of the state. Moreover, Hegel considers the institution of primogeniture, which guarantees the continued existence of the landed nobility, to be desirable for specifically political reasons, namely, that it helps ensure that the landed nobility's resources, and hence its members' independence, remain intact.³⁹ Yet the way in which Hegel appears to justify the necessity of the landed nobility and the institution of primogeniture in terms of political expediency fails to rule out the possibility of other institutions

performing the same functions with equal effectiveness; a possibility to which Hegel may himself have been blind on account of historical circumstances. This failure to rule out the possibility of identifying another institution which is capable of performing this same function equally well, if not better, than the landed nobility, turns Hegel's justification of the latter into an essentially contingent form of justification, so that it appears to have more in common with a historical form of justification than with a philosophical one.

It is not my intention here to examine in further detail Hegel's arguments for the necessity of the landed nobility. I instead intend to suggest that we can accord his philosophy of right a positive significance precisely because it contains such tensions between those features of his theory of ethical life which can be regarded as its traditional elements and those which can be regarded as its modern, progressive elements. For the tension between these elements suggests that Hegel's philosophy of right itself successfully reflects the contradictions between an emerging capitalist society and the attempt to restore, or maintain in the case of Germany, a feudal-absolutist form of society. It thus becomes possible to liken Hegel's philosophy of right to Balzac's presentation of the contradiction between the forces of capitalism and the attempt to restore a feudal-absolutist type of society, on the grounds that both Hegel and Balzac make us into the witnesses of the coming into being of a specific kind of social world. However, while the aim of a philosophical theory of right is to provide a conceptual exposition of this world, the novel portrays it in a way that allows us to witness the interpenetration of the particular and the universal, the contingent and the necessary, thus making up for its lack of conceptual clarity with its more adequate presentation of concrete social reality. This suggests that a complementary relationship might be thought to exist between philosophical theory and a novel such as Balzac's *Illusions perdues*, with Hegel's philosophy and Balzac's novel both reflecting in their own distinctive ways the tensions of the social world of which they are themselves products, thereby making this social world, including its contradictions, into the object of a reflective form of consciousness. The world in question, the world of modernity, was one that was still coming into being in Hegel's and Balzac's own time, so that the fact that Hegel's philosophy of right and Balzac's *Illusions perdues* present us with an opposition and tension between a modern and traditional world view can be seen as an essential part of the way in which they both adequately reflect the social world of Restoration Europe. In this respect, the same can be said of Hegel as Lukács says of Balzac: he succeeds in making us into the witnesses of the coming into being of a particular kind of social world.

I now intend to show how the complementary relation identified above as existing between the modern epic, as exemplified by Balzac's novels, and Hegel's philosophy of right can be further brought to light with reference to some other features of Lukács's interpretation of Balzac's *Illusions perdues*, with this time the emphasis being placed firmly on that which makes the social world that Balzac describes, and which Hegel seeks to comprehend in purely conceptual terms, into one that is essentially different from all earlier forms of society. I argue, moreover, that Lukács's understanding of what Balzac was able to achieve in his novels can be related to Hegel's remarks on the novel, in so far as Hegel identifies the latter as having two main aspects. The first aspect concerns the way in which the structures of modern ethical life are to be presented as determining an individual's thoughts and actions; while the other aspect concerns the presentation of this same individual's thoughts and actions in so far as they are not completely determined by these structures, because they also involve an element of free choice.

3. Civil Society as the Background to the Modern Epic

The fact that Lukács credits Balzac with bringing to light the way in which the growing forces of capitalism were coming to determine his own society is of particular relevance given Hegel's view of history as the process by means of which freedom is progressively realized in the world, thereby becoming an object of consciousness.⁴⁰ The realization of freedom, that is to say, its objectification in a set of laws and institutions which can be held to be adequate expressions of human freedom, consists of earlier and later stages, with the process of development which the consciousness of freedom undergoes constituting the interest that world history has for us. For Hegel, this process culminates in his own theory of the modern state, whose most recent development is the emergence of the sphere of ethical life which he calls civil society.

Whereas the institution of the family is for Hegel a natural one resting on feelings of affection, civil society 'tears the individual away from family ties, alienates the members of the family from one another, and recognizes them as self-sufficient persons'.⁴¹ The individual, freed of the natural bonds that unite the members of the family, then enters civil society as the 'concrete person who, as a *particular* person, as a totality of needs and a mixture of natural necessity and arbitrariness [*Willkür*], is his own end'.⁴² Despite the atomistic appearance that civil society thus assumes, it nevertheless forms

an interconnected totality because it is based on a set of relations of mutual dependence, which Hegel refers to as the 'system of needs', though this is not to say that its individual members, who act from self-interest, are necessarily conscious of this fact. The idea of civil society as an interconnected totality will be shown to form an important link between Hegel's theory of the modern state and Balzac's *Illusions perdues*.

Various common practices arise on the basis on the condition of mutual dependence that characterizes civil society. An example of a common practice which arises on the basis of the system of needs that Hegel himself gives is the way in which it becomes necessary for individuals to follow conventions concerning such matters as how one dresses and the time of day at which one eats one's meals.⁴³ In order to fulfil their own selfish purposes, individuals must, in short, act in conformity with the norms governing the general system in which such ends, including the ends of others as well as their own, can be best realized. In relation to Hegel's thoughts on the differences between the original epic and the modern epic, the novel, this shows that in modern ethical life it becomes difficult to distinguish between actions that are the result of an individual's own character and ones that are simply the product of social forces. Fashion may serve as an especially good example of this phenomenon, since Hegel describes it as follows: 'One imitates others, and this is the origin of fashion; one wants to have what others have, but once one has achieved this, one is then not satisfied; one wants to have something special. Then others copy this and thus it goes on endlessly.'⁴⁴ This description of fashion suggests that although the desire exists to distinguish oneself from others through having something special, the tendency to do as others do continuously reasserts itself, so that modern individualism has conformity as one of its unintended consequences. Thus, the desire to emulate extraordinary individuals on account of their virtue that we find in the ethical life of ancient Greece has, in modern society, been replaced by mere imitation, based on nothing more than the fear of appearing to be different from others and of not having what they have. This suggests another reason that the modern world might be thought to constitute an unsuitable background for epic literature.

A system of laws and institutions arises on the basis of the condition of mutual dependence which characterizes civil society; and in relation to Lukács's claim that Balzac succeeds in showing how the growing forces of capitalism determined the Restoration period to which he himself belonged, it is especially significant that the public authority (*die Polizei*) is one of the main institutions identified by Hegel in his account of civil society. For one particular example of how this institution protects the common interest

that arises on the basis of the system of needs is its regulation of the market economy that animates civil society, so that it functions effectively and in everyone's interests.⁴⁵ This function of the public authority provides evidence of the extent to which Hegel views the market economy as forming a constitutive feature of modern ethical life, while this recognition of the essential role played by the market in modern ethical life shows how Hegel's understanding of the historical significance of civil society was shaped by his reading and assimilation of the most advanced theories of political economy.⁴⁶ Indeed, in his philosophy of right, Hegel credits political economy with explaining the relations that govern civil society in so far as the latter constitutes 'the sphere of needs'.⁴⁷

While civil society, in virtue of its having its basis in the system of needs, forms an interconnected totality within which individuals think and act, it is nevertheless equally the sphere of modern ethical life in which individuals exercise free choice and experience the satisfaction of their particularity, so that Hegel also describes it as the sphere of ethical life in which everything particular has free play.⁴⁸ Consequently, civil society can be seen to contain the two main aspects that Hegel identifies as constituting a suitable background to the modern epic in his remarks on the novel: the existence of legal, social and economic structures that determine an individual's thoughts and actions, and this same individual's thoughts and actions in so far as they are left undetermined by these structures. Moreover, Hegel makes a distinction between the individual as *bourgeois* and the individual as *citoyen*. He associates the citizen (*Bürger*) as *bourgeois* specifically with civil society, and he describes the *bourgeois* as a private person, that is to say, someone who is concerned with the satisfaction of his needs and lacks any political relation, unlike the *citoyen*.⁴⁹ Since, as we shall later see, Hegel limits the extent to which many members of the modern state can be considered to be politically active, the characters of a novel set in the modern world are more likely than not to be persons whose activity is largely limited to, and determined by, the interconnected totality that he calls civil society.

Hegel's view of civil society as being a specific feature of modern ethical life, and as constituting an interconnected totality within which the individual as *bourgeois* thinks and acts, appears to place certain demands on a writer who wants to portray his or her characters in relation to the structures of modern ethical life that determine an individual's thoughts and actions in a way that does justice to the historical specificity of his or her social world, while also bringing to light the essential relation that exists between these structures and human thought and action. The writer will, in short, need to

portray an individual's thoughts and actions in relation to civil society because it forms the sphere of modern ethical life which distinguishes the latter from all earlier forms of the consciousness of human freedom. In this respect, Hegel himself might have granted that Balzac manages to portray something essential about modern ethical life in his novels if, as Lukács claims, he succeeds in showing how the growing forces of capitalism determined the Restoration period to which he himself belonged. For although there would be an element of contingency in a modern epic such as Balzac's *Illusions perdues* in so far as the individual's actions are portrayed as being to some extent the result of free choice, the novel's potential to portray how certain economic and social structures nevertheless determine an individual's thoughts and actions means that the subjective and contingent features which for Hegel characteristically form the content of the romantic form of art can be placed within an objective framework, consisting of various economic, legal and social relations. Consequently, the subjective and the objective, the necessary and the contingent, can be potentially unified within a single work of art. It is, in fact, precisely this unity of the particular (i.e. the character in a novel viewed as a private individual) and the universal (i.e. this same character viewed as a social being) that Lukács discerns in Balzac's *Illusions perdues*.⁵⁰

The novel's potential to reveal the interconnectedness that we find in civil society becomes manifest in Balzac's novel when he links the fates of its two central characters, the printer David Séchard and the aspiring poet Lucien Chardon, whose friendship forms one of the main themes of the first part of the novel, in a way that can be viewed as specific to modern society. Balzac does this, for example, by having David set out to discover a means of more cheaply producing high quantities of paper so as to meet the increased demand for paper which has arisen with the development of printing technology and the associated increase in the number of books and newspapers being printed; while Lucien, after his move to Paris to pursue a career as a poet, becomes involved with the book trade and the world of journalism, that is to say, with the very sources of the increased demand for cheap paper which David wants to meet. The fact that Balzac consciously makes such interconnectedness into the background of his novel is suggested by the following passage:

Ainsi, chose étrange! pendant que Lucien entraînait dans les rouages de l'immense machine du Journalisme, au risque d'y laisser son honneur et son intelligence en lambeaux, David Séchard, du fond de son imprimerie, embrassait le mouvement de la Presse périodique, dans ses conséquences

matérielles. Il voulait mettre les moyens en harmonie avec le résultat vers lequel tendait l'esprit du Siècle.⁵¹

Balzac here links the fates of David and Lucien in a way that involves a number of the distinctive features of the modern world, such as the role of the press, the economic laws of supply and demand, which have come to form the object of a distinctive branch of knowledge (i.e. political economy), and the effects of rapid technological advances; and by linking the fate of his characters to these features of the modern world, Balzac is able to do full justice to the historical specificity of the latter.

We can even relate the last example given above of how Balzac captures the historical specificity of the social world to which he himself belongs to Hegel's point that although centuries separate Homer from the events which he portrays, so that in this sense the epic poem is later than the life and spirit that it portrays, there is nevertheless a close connection between the spirit of the poet and the spirit of the world which he brings forth (i.e. the heroic world portrayed in the epic poem), so that the mythical world that Homer portrays is not alien to the world to which the epic poet himself belongs. A link between the world that he portrays and the world of which he is himself a member could also be said to exist in Balzac's case, in so far as he succeeds in portraying such features of the emerging world of modernity as mentioned above. However, whereas a slower rate of development means that there can be a close connection between the form of ethical life that Homer portrays and the one to which he himself belonged, even though centuries separate these two worlds, the rapid technological advances made in the modern world mean that only decades can separate the social world to which the writer belongs and the social world which he portrays in the case of the modern epic, the novel, if the essential connection between these two worlds is not to be lost. This phenomenon is again something which Balzac appears consciously to incorporate into his novel; for, at the very beginning of *Illusions perdues*, he describes the old-fashioned character of the presses to be found in the printing workshops of the provincial town of Angoulême as compared to those found in Paris, but then states that, at the time of writing the novel itself, the 'raging' mechanical presses have led this older way of printing to become entirely forgotten.⁵² This awareness of the way in which advances in technology were shaping modern society finds its corresponding expression in Hegel's theory of civil society, particularly in his remarks on the growing abstraction of labour, which is itself the result of the increasing mechanization of the workplace.⁵³ If we now turn to Lukács's account of how the forces of capitalism are portrayed in *Illusions perdues*, we shall

encounter some further reasons for claiming that this novel brings to light those features that constitute the historical specificity of the social world within which modern individuals think and act, and does so, moreover, in a way that unifies the subjective and the objective, the necessary and the contingent, within a single work of art.

Lukács claims that the theme of *Illusions perdues* is 'the transformation of literature (and with it of every ideology) into a commodity'.⁵⁴ He here has in mind the second part of the novel, which focuses on the experiences of Lucien, the aspiring poet, in Paris, ranging from his experiences of trying to sell his own literary creations to his experiences as a journalist. The idea that the transformation of literature into a commodity forms the main theme of the novel can be related to Hegel's philosophy of right because the alienation of intellectual productions, including literary works, forms part of his account of property, so that this phenomenon becomes an object of philosophical reflection. According to Hegel, persons can alienate (*entäußern*) items of property because my property is mine only in so far as I embody my will in it.⁵⁵ Although it may appear strange to consider an intellectual production to be external to a person in the way that other forms of property, such as land and goods, are, since it is a result of a person's own productive powers, an act of externalization is possible with respect to such productions, Hegel claims, because a literary work can assume a thing-like character, and thus come to resemble other material objects.⁵⁶ It can do so through being expressed in the form of 'a series of discrete and abstract *signs*', that is, in the medium of the written word, which then allows it to be mechanically reproduced by others.⁵⁷

Moving beyond Hegel's account of intellectual productions as forms of property, it might be said that although an author may treat his own intellectual productions *qua* material objects as external to himself, the thing-like character and independent existence that these productions assume in civil society, within which they become subject to market forces, may in certain circumstances not correspond to the author's own sense of their intrinsic nature and value, just as long as he regards them as expressing his own innermost thoughts, feelings and convictions. This is because an intellectual production, which constitutes an expression of one's freedom and productive powers, may take on the appearance of something alien to oneself by becoming the property of someone else, who had no role in producing it and does not value it for the same reasons as the author. In this respect, the alienation of intellectual productions threatens to become an incongruous element in a theory of right such as Hegel's, in which the various determinations of right, including property, are understood to constitute

the realization of human freedom. For an intellectual production, as something which is the unique product of one's expressive powers, may take on a form that makes it difficult to recognize as an expression of one's freedom, namely, when it is externalized to the extent of becoming the property of others and in this way subject to forces beyond one's control. A person can thus come to experience a strong sense of this discrepancy between his or her own conception of what he or she has produced and the alien, independent existence which the latter comes to assume in civil society. Yet whereas a philosophical theory of right abstracts from such subjective features as an author's personal reaction to the transformation of his own literary productions into commodities, the task of the novel is to portray these subjective features in relation to the interconnected totality which forms their background. The following passage from *Illusions perdues*, which describes Lucien's reaction to his first encounter with the mercenary practices of Parisian booksellers, can be regarded as a case in point:

Lucien traversa le Pont-Neuf en proie à mille réflexions. Ce qu'il avait compris de cet argot commercial lui fit deviner que, pour ces libraires, les livres étaient comme des bonnets de coton pour des bonnetiers, une marchandise à vendre cher, à acheter bon marché.

– Je me suis trompé, se dit-il frappé néanmoins du brutal et matériel aspect que prenait la littérature.⁵⁸

Although the experience described above is a subjective one, its objective dimension becomes recognizable if we view this subjective experience within the context which the novel itself provides by means of Balzac's presentation of the workings of the Parisian book industry, in which literary productions are treated as commodities and nothing more. In this way, the passage in question can be related to Lukács's account of reification in *History and Class Consciousness*, in which he argues that commodity relations provide the model of all objective forms of bourgeois society together with all the subjective forms corresponding to them, so that commodity structure must be seen as having penetrated society in all its aspects.⁵⁹ The passage in question provides such a good illustration of this phenomenon because Lucien can be seen to experience a sense of subjective alienation, in the sense of estrangement, through the products of his intellectual activity, which are for him the unique result of his own expressive powers, becoming dominated by objective forces, that is to say, by forces that are essential features of bourgeois civil society and, in virtue of this objectivity, appear to be independent of his own will. This phenomenon of subjective

alienation in relation to one's own intellectual productions is, in fact, hinted at by Hegel, even though he does not himself make the subjective form of commodity relations into an object of philosophical reflection. For he appears to acknowledge that individuals may come to experience objects, among which we can include intellectual productions, as an alien power in his account of civil society when he speaks of the property of others, which is what he thinks an intellectual production may become, as confronting individuals as 'a material which offers infinite resistance' and as something that is therefore 'absolutely unyielding'.⁶⁰

The fact that the possibility of subjective alienation in relation to one's own intellectual productions is not one that is thematically developed in Hegel's philosophy of right suggests that Balzac's novel, by portraying both the objective and subjective aspects of this phenomenon, complement Hegel's theory of right through its portrayal of a phenomenon that lies outside the latter's domain. Yet the novel's portrayal of this particular result of the institution of private property might also be said to point to the limitations of Hegel's conception of property, in so far as the latter is justified on the grounds that property constitutes one of the fundamental ways in which one's own freedom is given existence. It is not my intention to go into the details of Hegel's theory of property in order to ask whether he is ultimately able to counter such objections. For present purposes it is enough to have pointed out how this example of the way in which the modern epic, the novel, portrays the interpenetration of the universal and the particular that occurs in modern ethical life suggests that it has the potential for stimulating critical reflection.

A further point to be noted here is that although Balzac's *Illusions perdues* involves a unity of the subjective and objective, the necessary and contingent, the unity in question is not in this particular case to be regarded as an absolute one. This point can be illustrated with reference to Balzac's novel, in so far as, according to Lukács, 'the development of Lucien's character is inseparably bound up with the capitalist penetration of literature',⁶¹ and when we compare Lucien's situation to Hegel's characterization of the *pathos* found in ancient Greek tragedy. This *pathos*, as we have seen, is the absolute identification of oneself with one of the powers governing ethical life. Such *pathos* appears to be entirely absent in the case of a character such as Lucien, who has left his family to become a member of civil society and is not politically active, and thus represents an example of the atomization and deracination that can be encountered in modern society. Moreover, his intellectual gifts and what he produces by means of them have become subject to social forces beyond his control, leading his own literary creations to

become mere things which are bought and sold by the capitalist book sellers without any regard for their intrinsic value, while his experiences as a journalist lead him to employ his productive powers in ways that go against his own beliefs and convictions. Lucien is therefore to be seen as someone who must come to experience the features of modern ethical life which give rise to these forces as an alien power, rather than as ethical determinations that he actualizes through his own activity, as was the case with the heroes of ancient Greek tragedy. This suggests the possibility of an art form (i.e. the novel), which, rather than producing the certainty that the world cannot ultimately be characterized by rupture and estrangement, portrays how a sense of alienation, from the standpoint of the individual agent, constitutes a characteristic feature of modern ethical life because of the way in which the latter is organized. Indeed, it is the novel's ability to portray this rupture and estrangement that allows it adequately to reflect the social world out of which it itself emerges. To this extent, Lukács's description of Balzac's *Illusions perdues* as a novel of disillusionment appears wholly justified.⁶² The possibility of a novel of disillusionment, which is, moreover, compatible with Hegel's description of the nature of the modern epic, can be turned against Hegel's own philosophy of right, if the theory of modern ethical life contained in the latter is held to be an attempt on his part to reconcile modern, reflective individuals to their social world by showing them that it is a home. The possibility of such a novel does not, therefore, appear to be an idea that Hegel would have himself welcomed.

Viewing Hegel's own remarks on the novel in conjunction with Lukács's interpretation of Balzac's *Illusions perdues* brings to light, I believe, one good reason for thinking that Hegel's lectures on aesthetics most certainly do not demand the condemnation of all the artistic production of his own time as the decaying remnants of art itself, as Henrich claims. We can instead think of the classic realist novel as performing the function of providing the most adequate available presentation of the interpenetration of the particular and the universal, the contingent and the necessary, as it occurs in modern society, thereby making the objective features of modern ethical life in their relation to the contingency and particularity of everyday life into the object of a more reflective form of consciousness. In this way, it becomes possible to establish a firm link between the modern epic and its counterpart in the ancient world, which makes its own form of ethical life into the object of a more reflective, though this time uncritical, form of consciousness. For, like the epic poet, the writer of a modern epic can be thought to stand in a necessary relation to that which he portrays, namely, the essential relations governing the thoughts and actions of the members of the historical

community to which he himself belongs. The modern epic does this in a distinctive way, moreover, by presenting the interpenetration of the particular and the universal, the contingent and the necessary which is characteristic of modern ethical life as opposed to all earlier forms of society. The fact that Hegel does not himself appear to recognize the full potential of the modern epic is, however, understandable given his unfamiliarity with the type of work in which this potential is most fully revealed.

The possibility of interpreting Hegel's remarks on the novel in the light of his theory of modern ethical life is highly significant in relation to the following claim that he is recorded as having made in his lectures on aesthetics: 'The work of art must have the higher interests of spirit and the will as its content, [these] must shine through the external aspects of existence. . . . If this is the case, [if] substantial interests form its basis, the work of art is in itself objective and also speaks to our subjectivity'.⁶³ For the higher interests that he mentions in this passage might be identified with those of modern ethical life, which forms the background to the modern epic, and whose ultimate basis is to be sought in the concept of the will. Consequently, in the case of the modern epic, the novel, the objectivity of the work of art can be experienced by the members of this ethical world as not being alien to themselves in the sense that it is an expression of the social world to which they themselves belong. However, as previously mentioned, this does not rule out the possibility of one's experiencing a sense of alienation in relation to this social world, a sense of alienation which the modern epic is capable of presenting. Indeed, since part of the historical specificity of modern ethical life consists in the possibility of individuals' experiencing a sense of alienation in relation to their social world, the being at home with oneself in the work of art that Hegel mentions may paradoxically involve an element of estrangement, at least in so far as the modern epic successfully presents the conditions of modern ethical life in relation to the will. In this way, we now have a possible answer to the question as to how the harmony of the objectivity of the work of art and the subjectivity of those for whom it forms an object of consciousness might be achieved in later periods of history than those of classical Greece.

The modern epic must nevertheless be thought to differ from the original epic in one important respect. For while the original epic helped create and shape its ethical world, the modern epic is reduced to portraying a given social world that it does not itself have an essential role in bringing about. In relation to this point, it appears wrong to claim, with reference to Hegel's account of the Homeric heroes, that Hegel himself develops the

concept of the independent individual as the type of *homo politicus* that art should portray, so as to suggest the possibility of alternative social forms that would require doing away with the oppressive social and political structures of the present.⁶⁴ For, although I have suggested above that art may stimulate critical reflection on certain features of modern ethical life, Hegel does not himself think that a return to the age of heroes is possible for modern reflective individuals, and, even if it were, art would not itself be in the position to effect radical social change through its portrayal of such an age of heroes, given its limited significance in modern ethical life. Moreover, although we shall see in the next chapter that Hegel appears to recognize that the modern state is subject to certain limitations in so far as it is meant to constitute the realization of human freedom, his view of his own system of right as ‘the realm of actualized freedom’ implies that he did not entertain the possibility of a radically different, better form of society, let alone one that owes its existence to art. In the next chapter I intend to suggest, however, that certain features of the interpretation of Hegel’s lectures on aesthetics which I have offered can be related to a theory of the total transformation of society that makes use of the concept of myth. I shall argue that Hegel’s own conception of myth can be detected in this theory which accords to myth a transformative power, and that the possibility of relating this later use of myth to his theory of modern ethical life suggests that Hegel may have been wrong to have restricted the significance of myth, in so far as it functions as a means of orienting human action, to earlier periods of human history, including the Christian world prior to the objectification of the teachings of the Christian religion in the set of laws and institutions governing modern ethical life.

Chapter 6

Myth and Society: A Common Theme in the Thought of Hegel and Sorel

1. Sorel's Myth of the General Strike

We have seen that the concept of myth has an important role to play in Hegel's accounts of the symbolic and classical forms of art. In the latter, for example, art is viewed as giving the mythic consciousness of a whole nation a more determinate and abiding form in such a way as to orient human action. I have argued, moreover, that the revealed religion of Christianity, as Hegel presents it, can be thought of as an essentially mythic form of consciousness, without this in any way conflicting with Hegel's views concerning the historical significance of this religion. Hegel's account of the way in which the teachings of the Christian religion have become embodied in the laws and institutions of the modern state in turn led me to claim that the idea of the 'end of mythology' can be attributed to Hegel. Yet just as in the previous chapter I have tried to show how Hegel's theory of the end of art, in so far as such a theory can be attributed to him, can be challenged without introducing assumptions that he would not accept, I intend to suggest in this chapter that the idea of the end of mythology can be likewise viewed as problematic, on the grounds that it is possible to construct an account of how myth may both orient human action and be the most adequate means of doing so in the modern world. This will be done with reference to the theory of the social myth of the general strike put forward by the French socialist thinker, Georges Sorel, and again in such a way as not to introduce ideas that cannot be found, however implicitly, in Hegel's own thought. I argue that the ethical function which Hegel accords to classical Greek art, as exemplified by his account of the original epic, suggests a connection between his views on the role of myth in human society and history and those of Sorel, as presented in his *Reflections on Violence*, which was first published in 1908, and in which he develops his theory of the social myth of the general strike.

This may seem surprising given the fact that Sorel's theory of the social myth of the general strike appears to owe nothing whatsoever to Hegel; it was instead influenced by revolutionary syndicalism, a militant movement of the French trade unions (*syndicats*), by Vico's idea of the process of *ricorsi*, and by Henri Bergson's theory of intuition.¹ I argue, however, that in terms of its function, myth can be seen to play a very similar role in Sorel's theory of the social myth of the general strike to the one that Hegel assigns it in his account of the ethical life of ancient Greece, and, as I have argued, in his account of the Christian religion. Myth is, in short, held by both Hegel and Sorel to be the highest means of orienting human actions in a given historical community, though there is the major difference that Hegel denies this to be the case in the modern world while Sorel adopts the opposite position.

Hegel's rejection of the idea that in the modern world myth performs the same ethical function as the one it performed in the ethical life of ancient Greece and, I have suggested, in the Christian world, represents a fundamental difference between his and Sorel's account of myth. Hegel rejects the idea that myth will have an essential ethical function in modern ethical life because he thinks that he has established the validity of a set of laws and institutions which, in their relation to the subjective wills of the individual members of the modern state, are the source of ethical norms, by demonstrating that these laws and institutions constitute the existence of the free will. In this respect, myth can no longer be said to have an essential role to play in orienting the actions of modern, reflective individuals, though, as previously mentioned, Hegel thinks that, in the absence of insight into the way in which the concept of the will forms the principle of the modern state, some people may still require the presentation of a rational content in a religious, mythic form. By explaining the legitimacy of the laws and institutions of the modern state and its distinctive form of ethical life, as set out in his philosophy of right, in terms of the concept of the will instantiated in each and every individual subjective will, and by treating the modern form of ethical life as the realization of this concept, Hegel links his rejection of the idea that myth has an essential role to play in modern ethical life to a progressive theory of history. Sorel, by contrast, employs the category of myth in relation to the idea of a radical transformation of the modern world, thereby suggesting that myth may have a progressive role to play in modern society in the sense that it can bring about the transition to an alternative, better form of society, just as Hegel thinks it once did in the case of the Christian religion. Despite this fundamental difference between Hegel's and Sorel's views on the potential significance of myth in the modern world, I argue that the way in which Hegel himself identifies certain

tensions within his own theory of modern ethical life implies that Sorel's theory of the social myth of the general strike constitutes a possibility that he might have acknowledged. The different positions adopted by Hegel and Sorel might be related, therefore, to the way in which these tensions became more pronounced in the course of the eighty or so years separating Hegel's lectures on aesthetics from Sorel's *Reflections on Violence*. Once these tensions are taken into account, Hegel's position on the role of myth in society and history and Sorel's position on this same issue will be seen to illuminate each other.

Sorel describes myths as images of battle by means of which human beings participating in great social movements picture their coming actions, with these imaginary constructions making the agents in question certain that their cause will eventually triumph.² This shows that Sorel thinks of myth as motivating action in the sense of producing in the individuals concerned the firm belief that their actions will be effective, and, given the social nature of myth, these individual actions will, moreover, form part of a common purpose. In other words, myth serves to orient human action in a collective manner, just as Hegel thinks that it does in the ethical life of ancient Greece and, on my reading, in the Christian world as well. In the case of the Greek world, there is the important difference, however, that for Hegel myth, as presented by means of art, reinforces and reaffirms existing values; whereas in the Christian world the mythic consciousness introduces a new understanding of the world, which in turn leads to the transformation of the world, so that in this respect the mythic consciousness of the early Christian community appears closest in kind to the mythic consciousness that Sorel has in mind. Indeed, Sorel mentions religious myths, such as the Catholic Church's image of its history as a series of battles against Satan, as examples of his conception of myth.³ Since, for Sorel, myth serves to motivate actions, in the sense of producing the firm belief that an action will be effective, he can be also seen to hold the view that an imagistic form of consciousness is more favourable to decisive action than a discursive one; and this is an important point to which I shall return. In addition to religious myths, Sorel cites Marx's idea of 'catastrophic revolution' as an example of the type of myth that is capable of orienting and motivating human action, and in so doing makes possible the transformation of the existing world.⁴ He also mentions the example of how the military triumphs of the French Revolutionary and imperial armies came to achieve a mythical status in the minds of the French people, with the result that the institutions which arose in their wake were treated as inviolable, while the ideology used to justify them became a faith which appeared to have the same status that the revelation of

Jesus has for Catholics. Sorel also points to the way in which events of the revolutionary period, such as the riots and events of internal politics, developed into a dramatic mythology that raised them to an epic level in people's minds.⁵

The idea that myth had a significant role to play in the revolutionary period of French history suggests another possible example of the ethical function that Sorel wants to attribute to myth in the modern world, that is, the function of effectively orienting and motivating people's actions in a collective manner. This example is suggestive of Hegel's views on the role of myth in so far as he associates myth with art. The example in question is drawn from the works of the Jacobin painter, Jacques Louis David, whose portrayal of events from ancient history not only came to form an important part of Republican iconography, but also influenced revolutionary praxis. For in the painting *The Oath of the Horatii*, the gesture found in the outstretched arms of the Horatii became the standard manner of taking a revolutionary oath.⁶ In this way, past history, once it had achieved mythic status by being given the form of a single, unified image, helped shape present history. While Sorel mentions the events of the French Revolution itself as attaining a mythic status, the example I have just given is of an event from ancient history, or, rather, a modern interpretation of this event, shaping present history. This example nevertheless suggests, I believe, that Hegel may have underestimated the role of myth in orienting human actions in modern society, in a way that is, moreover, significant from the standpoint of a progressive theory of history, because it relates to the French Revolution, which for Hegel himself was an event of world historical significance. The question therefore arises as to whether myth can, after all, be accorded the same kind of universal significance that Hegel thinks it had in earlier periods of human history, when it was the primary means of orienting the actions of the members of a given historical community. I intend to show in what follows that once it is viewed in the light of the tensions to which Hegel himself thinks modern ethical life is subject, Sorel's theory of the social myth of the general strike suggests one way in which myth might be thought to have the potential for attaining such universal significance in the modern world.

Sorel's theory of the social myth of the general strike contains the idea that myth orients actions in a way that involves the past having the potential to shape the future, because this myth is, on the one hand, the imaginary construction of a state of affairs that is to be brought about through human action, and, on the other hand, it has itself arisen on the basis of past events (i.e. earlier mass strikes by the proletariat), which have come to take on a mythical and canonical status in people's minds. The future-oriented aspect of the myth of the general strike consists, more specifically, in the image of

a catastrophic event, in which the existing social order is completely overthrown to be replaced with an alternative, better form of society. The myth of the general strike evokes the idea of such a catastrophic event because it is the clearest expression of the class struggle found in capitalist society, with proletarian violence, as it manifests itself in the general strike, forcing the bourgeoisie to defend its material interests.⁷ The myth of the general strike thus represents the complete rejection of any attempt to reconcile the interests of the proletariat with those of the capitalist class.⁸ This absolute opposition of one class in relation to another class amounts instead to a condition of war; and it consequently demands heroism and valour of the proletariat engaged in the general strike.⁹

In order for it to be truly effective, that is to say, for it to bring the class struggle to its highest pitch, the myth of the general strike will have to possess absolute validity in the minds of the proletariat, and this relates to Sorel's point that myths which act as historical forces must be taken as a whole, as opposed to being analysed and broken down into their elements.¹⁰ His point here is that the absolute integrity of myth, that is, its being a single image which is vividly present in the agent's mind, is what enables it to give rise to a clear sense of purpose and to lead to decisive action on the part of the agent concerned; whereas if it were to become an object of reflection, as when it is subject to a process of analysis and for this purpose broken down into its constituent parts, the social myth of the general strike might be made to appear less convincing. For example, the opposition found in the class struggle might come to seem less absolute than it really is, or its outcome might appear less certain, leading to attempts by the representatives of the opposing parties to reconcile the interests of the proletariat with those of the capitalist class. Therefore, in order for it to evoke in the proletariat the sentiments needed to engage successfully in the class struggle, that is to say, by bringing its members together through giving them a common goal and sense of purpose and making them believe that their cause must triumph in the end, the myth of the general strike must have the appearance of being unquestionably right and in no need of further justification in the minds of the proletariat. Sorel himself describes the way in which the myth of the general strike, in its sheer immediacy, serves effectively to orient and motivate in a collective fashion the actions of the proletariat as follows:

. . . the general strike groups them all in a coordinated picture [*tableau*] and, by bringing them together, gives to each one of them its maximum intensity; appealing to their painful memories of particular conflicts,

it colours with an intense life all the details of the composition presented to consciousness. We thus obtain that intuition of socialism which language cannot give us with perfect clearness – and we obtain it as a whole, perceived instantaneously.¹¹

Sorel here states unequivocally his view that the myth of the general strike is of an essentially non-discursive kind, and that its effectiveness absolutely depends on its being of this kind. In this respect, his conception of myth accords with Hegel's views on the essentially uncritical nature of the individual's relation to the content of myth in the ancient world, whereas it is precisely the reflective nature of modern individuals that makes Hegel regard myth as no longer being the most appropriate means of orienting human action in the modern world. In the next section, I argue, however, that Sorel's claim that myth is, in the case of the proletariat, the most adequate means of orienting human action is to some extent reconcilable with Hegel's theory of modern ethical life.

It here needs to be pointed out that there is a sense in which Sorel views myth as constituting a form of knowledge. This is because it provides the clearest expression of the essence of socialism, which for Sorel consists in the idea of the absolute nature of the class struggle found in capitalist society. In this respect, despite his wish to preserve the integrity of myth on account of the dangers involved in any attempt to subject it to critical analysis, Sorel can be seen to hold the view that to some extent at least the content of myth may be expressed in a discursive form (e.g. in Marxist theory), so that the myth of the general strike need not be treated as something entirely irrational. The point is rather that the mythic form, which may be considered to be irrational in virtue of its sheer immediacy and the proletariat's unquestioning acceptance of its validity, is the most effective one in which the content, the absolute nature of the class struggle in capitalist society, can be brought to consciousness in such a way as to determine the actions of the proletariat in a collective and effective manner. This does not rule out the possibility of gaining insight into this content which is of a more discursive kind, however, whereas it has been claimed that Sorel's theory is that of a mythology immune to rational criticism;¹² and this is a point to which I intend to return in the next section in relation to certain tensions found in Hegel's theory of modern ethical life. Moreover, although according to bourgeois philosophy violence is a relic of barbarism which is bound to disappear with the progress of enlightenment,¹³ Sorel, by contrast, thinks that the proletariat may save the world from barbarism by giving rise to a new social order, one in which 'both employers and the State

will be removed by the organized producers'.¹⁴ This will require the producers exhibiting the kind of enthusiasm and virtue found in the soldiers of the French Revolutionary armies as they labour in workshops where there are no longer any masters. This new state of affairs will lead to an improvement both in the quality and in the quantity of the goods produced, so that the economic progress promised by the period of capitalism is fully realized.¹⁵

The idea of the abolition of the state and the utopian vision of a future society espoused by Sorel must be seen as completely alien to Hegel's viewpoint, given the role of the state in his theory of modern ethical life and his view of the modern state as constituting the realization of human freedom. The way in which Sorel describes proletarian violence as 'heroic',¹⁶ and speaks of it as producing 'an entirely epic state of mind [*un état d'esprit tout épique*]',¹⁷ might be understood, however, to suggest the possibility of a new age of heroes, in which a group of individuals, the proletariat, performs exemplary actions oriented by myth, and in so doing gives rise to a new, more truly ethical social order, so that in this respect the use of violence is to be considered justified. Such a possibility can be related to the idea of a right of heroes of which Hegel speaks. This right of heroes is the right to establish states by forcibly introducing such institutions as agriculture and marriage; for even though the forcible introduction of these institutions are actions that are not themselves performed in accordance with any recognized ethical norms, they nevertheless employ coercion in a legitimate way, in the sense that these actions make possible an ethical condition which would not otherwise have existed.¹⁸ There is, of course, a fundamental difference between Hegel's conception of such a right and Sorel's views on proletarian violence, which is that Sorel has in mind a new social order that is to be established on the ruins of the modern state, whereas Hegel thinks of the latter as constituting a legitimate social order that makes the idea of a right of heroes unacceptable in the modern world. Consequently, although Sorel's use of such terms as 'heroic' and 'epic' in connection with the myth of the general strike might be understood as proclaiming the possibility of a new age of heroes, Hegel would obviously want to deny such a possibility.

Hegel's views on the ethical function of epic poetry, and, by extension, myth, in the ethical life of ancient Greece also clearly differ from Sorel's views on myth because the social myth of the general strike serves to orient the actions of a certain group of people within society, whereas, according to Hegel, the original epic orients the actions of all the members of a given historical community. Yet the proletariat's actions, as oriented by the myth of the general strike, might be regarded as having universal significance because they aim to bring about a new form of society in which the limitations of class

society are overcome, and in which the potential of all human beings is to be realized. In this respect, Sorel's theory of the social myth of the general strike, in so far as its ethical function is concerned, can be seen to involve a modification of Hegel's views on myth in line with a different assessment of the extent to which the modern state can be thought to constitute a truly ethical social order. In the next section I show that if we take into account Hegel's own understanding of the tensions found in the modern state, there are some grounds for thinking that this modification of his views on the significance of the mythical consciousness offered, unintentionally it seems, by Sorel is in fact justified.

2. Myth and Modern Ethical Life

In the previous chapter we saw that Hegel provides a conceptual exposition of an emerging social world, and we shall now see that in so doing he manages to point to the class divisions integral to Sorel's theory of the social myth of the general strike, which depends on the idea of a class struggle. Hegel's awareness of the problem of social division is evident from his identification of a group of people who are denied the benefits that civil society has to offer in his remarks on poverty, which he states is a necessary consequence of civil society.¹⁹ What Hegel means by this is that poverty is a direct result of the normal workings of the market economy that animates civil society, as is clear from his recognition of the problem of overproduction, which occurs when the volume of goods produced lacks a corresponding number of consumers, so that levels of production have to be reduced, with the result that people are put out of work and cannot therefore support themselves and their families.²⁰ While this makes it sound as if the main problem is that of providing a solution to the problem of poverty in the sense of guaranteeing people the means to live,²¹ I shall argue below that guaranteeing the poor the means to live would not resolve the main problem affecting civil society that Hegel has in mind, namely, the problem of social alienation, which for him affects other people in addition to the unemployed and constitutes the greatest challenge to his theory of modern ethical life. This will in turn allow me to establish a firmer link between Hegel's conception of myth and Sorel's social myth of the general strike, despite the apparently fundamental differences between them mentioned in the previous section. In order to understand why the problems of social alienation and social division for Hegel extend beyond the question of guaranteeing people the means to live, we first need to look at the lack of

insight into the rationality of modern ethical life available to those individuals who are denied the benefits that civil society has to offer its members, and at how, according to Hegel, these people tend to form a rabble.²²

When, as previously mentioned, Hegel locates the basis of the modern state in the concept of will instantiated in each and every individual will, and considers right to be the existence of the free will, he bases the legitimacy of the various moments of his theory of modern ethical life on their status as laws and social and political institutions that allow individuals to experience their social world as something that enables them to realize their own wills. This happens when, for example, laws and institutions guarantee all individuals a sphere in which they may exercise free choice without unjust interference from others, or when institutions accord with that which Hegel calls the right of subjective freedom, which gives rise to the demand for the satisfaction of individual welfare.²³ The way in which the modern state allegedly meets such demands forms an essential part of Hegel's attempt to explain the possibility of the type of ethical disposition that involves an 'insight grounded on reasons', among which he includes 'certain particular ends, interests, and considerations'.²⁴ For the fact that the state is held to guarantee individual welfare and allow individuals to pursue their own ends and interests more effectively provides people with good reasons for accepting that the state of which they are members is in fact a legitimate one. Hegel thinks that this type of insight is an essential feature of the modern state; a form of insight that serves to make individuals identify themselves more closely with the latter and to will its existence. This is evident from his description of modern patriotism, in which the interest that the individual has in seeing his state flourish is linked to the fact that he finds his own particularity satisfied within the state.²⁵ Although guaranteeing the poor the means to live might go some way towards allowing them to think of their own particularity as being satisfied within the state, Hegel importantly recognizes that there is a further set of needs that civil society must satisfy, including the sense of self-identity and self-respect gained through work, and the opportunity to exercise free choice in accordance with one's own conception of happiness, which arguably demands that one can be meaningfully said to be in a position to choose, as opposed to having one's ability to do so severely limited by a lack of resources.

When discussing the various dispositions that individuals may have towards the determinations of modern ethical life, Hegel also speaks of a 'relationless identity – in which the ethical is the actual living principle of self-consciousness', and he claims that '*adequate cognition* of this identity belongs to conceptual thought'.²⁶ The identity in question, based as it is on

a conceptual form of knowledge, can be interpreted as meaning the identity of the concept of the will instantiated in each and every individual will and the concept of right that obtains in virtue of the concept of the will and right being the subjective and objective aspects of the same thing, namely, human freedom. A conceptual knowledge of this identity is therefore to be understood as knowledge of the concept of will together with knowledge of the way in which right constitutes the existence of this concept. Yet even if the poor were to have such knowledge, it could only increase their sense of being alienated from the modern state, which they would recognize as failing to constitute an adequate expression of their own subjective wills.

We are consequently confronted with a group of people who are in effect denied the two main forms of insight into the rationality of the modern state that Hegel identifies. Hegel himself appears to recognize that the way in which society is organized prevents the poor from experiencing the realization of their freedom when he concedes that poverty gives rise to a sense of inner rebellion because 'the freedom of the individual has no existence [*Dasein*]', with the result that the recognition of universal freedom disappears.²⁷ In other words, although right is meant to be the concrete expression and existence of human freedom, the fact that some individuals cannot experience their social world in this way means that freedom is not universally realized in the modern state, even though the principle of equality demands its universal realization. In relation to Sorel's theory of the social myth of the general strike, it is significant that Hegel views this problem as one that equally affects a group of people who appear to play a more active role in civil society, but who, in fact, suffer a similar plight to that of the poor with respect both to their material existence and to the sense of alienation they are likely to experience in relation to their social world.

A notable feature of Hegel's account of poverty and social alienation is that he describes the plight of unskilled workers, who are restricted to abstract, mechanical forms of labour, in terms that suggest that they are not much better off than the unemployed.²⁸ One reason for this is that the growing abstraction and mechanization of labour mean that many jobs in modern society will be ones that almost any person can perform, which in turn means that employers, since they can easily find people to do these jobs, can keep wages low so as to make a greater profit. Hegel consequently thinks that a condition of poverty will be something that unskilled workers share in common with the unemployed, with the result that, like the latter, unskilled workers will lack an important source of insight into the rationality of modern ethical life. Hegel suggests, moreover, that unskilled workers are equally likely to form a rabble. The specific problem of the rabble,

which will allow us to establish a direct link between Hegel's account of modern ethical life and Sorel's theory of the social myth of the general strike, can be best illustrated with reference to an institution that Hegel thinks has a vitally important ethical role to play in civil society precisely because it helps prevent the formation of a rabble, namely, the corporation.

The corporation is an institution made up of people who pursue the same trade or occupation; and this is why Hegel describes it as characteristic of the estate of trade and industry.²⁹ Corporations in fact set the standards that determine whether an individual is skilled or able enough to practise a trade or occupation,³⁰ with the recognition that the corporation thus bestows on individuals making this institution into an important source of self-identity and self-respect, or honour, as Hegel himself calls it.³¹ By pursuing the same trade or occupation, the members of the corporation also come to share a common identity and common purpose; and the way in which the members of a corporation thus become part of a wider social whole, thereby transcending the atomism that otherwise characterizes civil society, led one of Hegel's followers, Eduard Gans, to describe the role of the corporation in his own lectures on the philosophy of right given not long after Hegel's death as the socialization (*Vergesellschaftlichung*) of the disunited parts of civil society.³² In line with this understanding of the corporation's function, Hegel himself claims that with the corporation '*the ethical returns* to civil society as an immanent principle'.³³ This shows that whatever one thinks of the actual details of Hegel's theory of the corporation, he can be seen as making a more general point, which is that such institutions are needed to prevent the atomization of society; a function that cannot be performed by the family alone because of the way in which its members become independent persons once they enter civil society. Yet the fact that Hegel makes membership of a corporation depend on one's practising a trade or occupation, and on one's being deemed able or competent enough to do so, means that the increasing number of unskilled workers found in civil society will be denied the sense of self-identity and self-respect which comes from being the member of a corporation, as well as lacking the common identity and sense of purpose that a corporation fosters in its members. We thus have the possibility of another group of people, in addition to the unemployed, that will lack any meaningful ethical relation both to other individuals and to society as a whole, and that therefore belongs to the disunited parts of civil society. Hegel thinks, moreover, that the disunity of this class of people rules out the possibility of its members having a meaningful relation to the political state, since for him civil society comes into relation

to the political state by means of the deputies which the members of a corporation elect to represent their collective interests, with these deputies then forming part of the legislature.³⁴ Hegel's account of how this happens and why it needs to happen provides in fact a good illustration of how serious he takes the problem of a rabble to be in the modern state.

In his account of the legislative power, Hegel concerns himself with the issue of the precise nature of the relation of civil society to the political state, so as to dispel the impression that we have the political state, on the one hand, and the people as a collection of private persons, on the other. Hegel describes the people understood in this way as 'a formless mass whose movement and activity can consequently only be elemental, irrational, barbarous, and terrifying', and as 'that category of citizens *who do not know their own will*' on account of their lack of knowledge and insight.³⁵ Although this view of the people may be regarded as simply representing a prejudice on Hegel's part, he nevertheless has an important point to make which can be stated more or less independently of such a view of the people, namely, that there is a need for mediating institutions whose function is to ensure that the interests governing civil society, which have their ultimate basis in self-interest, can be harmonized with the universal interests of society as a whole, which are the concern of the political state. For it is plausible to maintain that without this element of mediation it would not be possible to generate consent and reconcile the interests of the individuals and groups that make up civil society in a meaningful way. This shows that although for Hegel the laws and institutions of modern ethical life constitute the existence of the concept of the will, and in this sense are conditions to which individuals can reasonably submit themselves, this is not by itself enough to guarantee that there will in fact be consensus at a more concrete level. Consequently, a theory of right must at the very least identify the mechanism whereby such consensus is to be generated.

Hegel thinks that the first step towards generating consensus and reconciling the particular interests that animate civil society is taken within the latter itself, in which the corporation forms the institutional expression of the common interest that arises within civil society on account of the dependence that one has on others with respect to the satisfaction of one's own needs. For although particular corporations may come into being through people recognizing that their own interests can be best realized by cooperating with others, in the process of cooperating with others its members will come to share a common purpose and to develop a common identity. They will also need to demonstrate towards each other such ethical qualities as a high level of personal commitment and the willingness

to subordinate their own personal interests to those of the corporation as whole if the particular corporation to which they belong is to fulfil its original purpose. In this respect, a corporation already constitutes a unified whole when it comes into a relation to the political state by means of the deputies whom its members elect to form part of the legislature. The election of deputies in fact represents the only genuinely political act performed by each individual member of the corporation, who therefore remains a *bourgeois* rather than also becoming a *citoyen* apart from this single act. Given the fact that unskilled workers as well as the poor are excluded from this process of mediation, because membership of a corporation depends on official recognition of one's possession of the skills and competencies necessary to carry out a certain trade, or on one's being considered to be a fit member of a particular profession, Hegel's account of the role performed by the corporation in relation to the political state, irrespective of whether it is itself convincing or not, is highly significant because it can be seen to anticipate later developments and issues. Hegel was himself perhaps not fully aware of these developments and issues; yet they involve simply stating in bolder form some of the implications of his own theory of modern ethical life.

To begin with, the important mediating function that Hegel assigns to the corporation in his theory of modern ethical life implies the existence of a group of people who are not only denied the material and spiritual (e.g. cultural) benefits that civil society has to offer, but are also completely divorced from the political process which helps determine the precise form which modern ethical life, including civil society, takes in any given society purely on account of the type of labour they perform. Hegel here clearly anticipates the young Marx's identification of a social class, the proletariat, which is not a part of civil society even while being a part of it.³⁶ This class is understood by Hegel as being the result of new economic forces and new labour and wage relations; whereas the older term 'rabble' (*Pöbel*), which he himself still uses to designate this class of people, had always been used to refer to the lower classes within a traditional society of ranks and orders.³⁷ Thus, although Hegel uses this older term, it signifies for him a peculiarly modern phenomenon. Secondly, given the way in which Hegel recognizes that the emergence of this group of people is linked to the increasing abstraction and mechanization of labour, we must assume that the numbers of people belonging to this group will, all things remaining equal, grow in proportion to the increase in the abstraction and mechanization of labour. This implies that modern ethical life will contain an increasing number of people who fall outside the institution of the corporation, as it is understood

by Hegel. We may therefore question the effectiveness of this institution in the face of the growth in the number of people who fall outside it and thus come to belong to the disunited, atomized part of civil society. In this respect, one might argue that such atomization is an integral feature of the modern state that can only be overcome by means of a radical transformation of society, whereas Hegel tries to overcome it by means of an institution that appears outdated.

Moreover, Hegel identifies another group of people who appear to fall outside the institution of the corporation and who in their own way constitute a rabble: the increasing number of capitalists who have managed to become ever more wealthy on the back of the increase and refinement of needs and the consequent need to produce the objects that will satisfy them; objects which can be produced more and more cheaply on account of the abstraction and mechanization of labour, with its lower production costs and higher profit margins. According to Hegel, the rich man develops a rabble mentality when he comes to regard everything as something that can be bought, because he then 'knows himself as the power of the particularity of self-consciousness'.³⁸ In other words, the rich person's wealth appears to make him independent of the condition of mutual dependence which otherwise characterizes civil society, and which for Hegel finds its highest expression in the corporation, where we have a group of people united by a common identity and purpose. It is the way in which the rich man appears to be independent of society that makes it possible to think of him as lacking a universal form of activity.

Therefore, at its extremes, civil society presents us with two masses of people with opposing interests, so that Hegel might be said to have anticipated the idea of a conflict between labour and capital. This in turn suggests that modern ethical life is essentially subject to an absolute opposition of the kind which Sorel thinks receives its highest practical expression in the social myth of the general strike. Moreover, while Hegel himself treats those members of civil society who are denied the benefits that it has to offer as a disorganized mass, it might be objected that these people do in fact share a common interest, namely that of changing society in such a way that it comes to constitute the existence of their own wills;³⁹ and, given the increasing number of people who are likely to be members of the class of people that Hegel associates with the increasing abstraction and mechanization of labour, the ability of this class of people to organize itself would arguably turn it into a potent historical force capable of effecting such a transformation. Conversely, the members of the rich capitalist class have a common interest in preventing the transformation of society. Finally,

many of the features that Hegel associates with the corporation might be considered to be precisely the kinds of qualities that Sorel admires in the French *syndicats*, including a strong sense of a common purpose and common identity, and the demonstration of such ethical qualities as a high level of personal commitment and the willingness to subordinate one's own personal interests to those of the whole of which one is a member. The question therefore arises as to how this class of people can pursue this common interest most effectively, and Sorel's theory of the social myth of the general strike provides one possible answer to this question, because he views this myth as providing the most adequate means of orienting the actions of the proletariat in the class struggle which he holds to be the essence of capitalist society.

Since Hegel anticipates the idea of a class struggle in so far as his theory of modern ethical life registers the emergence of two groups within the modern state which both fall outside the institutional framework designed to generate consensus, and whose interests appear to be diametrically opposed to each other, we can, I think, explain away one of the remaining differences between his conception of myth and that of Sorel in his theory of the social myth of the general strike. For the way in which Hegel suggests that the opposition between these two groups of people is an objective feature of modern ethical life, in the sense of being a necessary result of the way in which the latter is organized, makes it possible to think of modern, reflective individuals as regarding myth, in so far as it expresses this opposition, as having a rational content. Moreover, as previously mentioned, Hegel himself recognizes that those people who are deprived of the benefits that civil society has to offer lack the two main forms of insight that he thinks are available into the rationality of modern ethical life. Consequently, in acting in accordance with the myth of the general strike, which involves attempting to overthrow the existing social order and to establish a radically new form of society that gives existence to their own wills, the proletariat cannot be said to be acting irrationally, given Hegel's views on what constitutes the source of the legitimacy of the laws and institutions of modern ethical life. Therefore, although Hegel does not himself think of the class struggle as being the essence of the modern state, it is possible to argue that his account of the modern state allows us to think of Sorel's social myth of the general strike as expressing in a non-discursive form the conditions of the social world which Hegel regards as being a more or less definitive one in so far as the realization of human freedom is concerned. The question thus becomes that of whether there are grounds for claiming that myth is the highest form in which this content, the opposition found in modern ethical life between two classes, can be present to consciousness;

and, as we have seen, Sorel provides one reason for claiming that it is, namely, that the form in question is, in virtue of its immediacy, the most effective one when it comes to orienting and motivating people's actions in a collective manner, whereas theorizing might prove dangerous because it could undermine the proletariat's unity of purpose. Sorel thereby considers myth to have the same potential to act as a historical force as Hegel thought it had in the case of Christianity's transformation of the world.

While Sorel thinks that the social myth of the general strike will orient and motivate the proletariat's actions in such a way as to make possible the establishment of an entirely new, better form of society, I here leave open the question as to whether the type of society he has in mind could in fact be established by these means. It is nevertheless clear that the historical force with which Sorel wishes to credit the myth of the general strike represents a threat to Hegel's vision of modern ethical life, since this myth is held to possess a destructive potential aimed at abolishing the state and replacing it with an entirely different form of society, so that the aim of revolutionary violence is not to be understood as the transference of political power from one group of people to another. Myth is thus seen as leading to the dissolution of modern ethical life, whose ultimate condition is, for Hegel, the modern state, whereas in the ancient Greek world myth is seen as serving to clarify, sustain and perpetuate a given form of ethical life. In this respect, there remains a fundamental difference between the ethical functions that Hegel and Sorel assign to the mythic consciousness. Yet the fact that Sorel's theory of the social myth of the general strike can be meaningfully related to certain tensions contained within Hegel's own theory of modern ethical life suggests that this difference might be explained in terms of the different historical conditions under which the modern mythical consciousness is formed. A re-emergence of the mythical consciousness of the kind that Sorel has in mind might therefore be explained in terms of tensions inherent within the modern nation state, tensions of which Hegel was himself to some extent aware, so that once again this re-emergence of the mythical consciousness need not be classed as an irrational one, but as a sign of acute crisis within the modern state. Alternatively, it might be held to be an expression of the irrationality of modern ethical life, whose rationality for Hegel consists in its being the objectification of human freedom, though this is a standard which he himself appears to have doubted the modern state fully meets.

Consequently, although the persistence of the state might be held to show that the idea of its abolition, which forms the positive dimension of the catastrophic events that the social myth of the general strike is to bring

about, is an implausible one, Sorel's use of the category of myth suggests that Hegel was perhaps wrong to view the mythical consciousness, in so far as it has the potential to manifest itself as a historical force, as necessarily being a thing of the past. In this way, just as the compatibility of Lukács's views on the epic status of Balzac's novels with important aspects of Hegel's aesthetics and his social and political thought invites a reconsideration of the idea of the end of art, in so far as such an idea can be attributed to Hegel, Sorel's theory of the social myth of the general strike might lead to a reconsideration of the claim implicit in Hegel's lectures on aesthetics that myth no longer has an essential ethical role to play in modern ethical life. This need not, however, be thought to indicate a weakness in the theory of the significance of art and myth in the modern world that Hegel developed in his lectures on aesthetics. For the possibility of relating his thoughts on such topics as the differences between the original epic and the modern epic and the role of mythology in human society to the work of thinkers such as Lukács and Sorel may be seen instead as evidence of the way in which Hegel was to some extent able to transcend the social world and historical community in which he himself lived, despite his recognition of the fact that each individual, including the philosopher, is a child of his or her own time.

Notes

Introduction

¹ Hegel uses the terms ‘philosophy of art’ and ‘aesthetics’ interchangeably, as is shown by the fact that when announcing his 1826 lectures on this topic, he gave them the title *Aesthetice sive philosophiam artis*. Cf. *von der Pfordten* 1826, 41. I refer to them as his lectures on aesthetics because this title better suits the way in which the idea of a mythic collective consciousness, as well as art in the narrower sense of term, is an essential feature of these lectures, which can thus be regarded as treating both art and myth as aesthetic forms of consciousness.

² *von der Pfordten* 1826, 51.

³ *Hotho* 1823, 25.

⁴ *von der Pfordten* 1826, 56.

⁵ For examples of this approach see Bungay, *Beauty and Truth*; Desmond, *Art and the Absolute*; and Wicks, *Hegel’s Theory of Aesthetic Judgment*. While Bungay and Wicks repeatedly seek to explain Hegel’s aesthetics in terms of his logic, Desmond, without direct reference to the latter, seeks to explain the metaphysical significance that Hegel accords to art and, more specifically, the aesthetic category of beauty.

⁶ Schaeffer, *Art of the Modern Age*, 141.

⁷ In this respect, the aim of disengaging Hegel’s aesthetics as much as possible from his logic can be seen as analogous to the aim of disengaging his ethics from his speculative logic on the basis of worries concerning the claims of the latter. Cf. Wood, *Hegel’s Ethical Thought*, 4ff.

⁸ *Hotho* 1823, 13; *von der Pfordten* 1826, 51.

⁹ *Hotho* 1823, 5.

¹⁰ Cf. Gethmann-Siefert, ‘Ästhetik oder Philosophie der Kunst’. The sections on music in Hotho’s edition of the lectures serve as a good example of his inclusion of ideas that should not be attributed to Hegel, since some of the ideas found in Hegel’s alleged theory of music can in fact be traced back to ideas found in Hotho’s own book *Vorstudien für Leben und Kunst*. Cf. Gethmann-Siefert, ‘Das “moderne” Gesamtkunstwerk. Die Oper’, in Gethmann-Siefert (ed.), *Phänomen versus System*, 197ff.

Moreover, Hegel’s characterization of beauty as ‘the sensory appearance of the Idea [*das sinnliche Scheinen der Idee*]’, which is found in Hotho’s edition of the lectures and often plays an important role in interpretations of Hegel’s aesthetics is not to be found in any of the available student transcripts of the lectures. Cf. Gethmann-Siefert, *Einführung in Hegels Ästhetik*, 241f. This is not to say that the transcripts do not contain similar statements. For example, Hegel claims that art

in its appearance (*Scheinen*) points to something higher, namely thought, and that the sensory elements found in the work of art are raised to the level of appearance (*Schein*), so that art stands between the sensory as such and pure thought. *Hotho* 1823, 3. It must be pointed out, however, that such claims are not especially prominent or frequent in the transcripts of the lectures. Indeed, in the last series of lectures given in 1828/29 there are hardly any claims that might be construed as being of a similar nature to the ones mentioned above.

¹¹ As do some of the articles in a recent book in English on Hegel's aesthetics. Cf. Houlgate (ed.), *Hegel and the Arts*. The articles in this collection are based either entirely on the Hotho edition of the lectures or on the latter in conjunction with some of the student transcripts of the lectures.

¹² Cf. Hammermeister, *The German Aesthetic Tradition*, 88.

¹³ Cf. Gethmann-Siebert, 'Phänomen versus System', in Gethmann-Siebert (ed.), *Phänomen versus System*.

¹⁴ Hegel's account of the particular art forms can be viewed as highly problematic in so far as it seeks to develop a system of arts. Cf. Schaeffer, *Art of the Modern Age*, 158ff. Since it is not my intention to defend the systematic nature of Hegel's aesthetics, I do not plan to deal with this issue, though it is one that a full account of his aesthetics would perhaps need to confront. It is worth noting, however, that Schaeffer acknowledges that such problems might be the result of the composite nature of the edition of the lectures on which his account of Hegel's aesthetics is based. As we have seen above, the systematic appearance of these lectures can be attributed to Hotho's editorial work. Indeed, some of the particular confusions that Schaeffer identifies might well be attributable to the fact that the Hotho edition of the lectures is divided into three parts, whereas Hegel only gave this three-part structure to the last series of lectures, with the other lecture series being divided into only two main parts. One might therefore suspect that material from the earlier lectures has been taken out of context and made to fit a structure that is different from the one in which it was originally located.

Chapter 1

¹ Cf. Geuss, *Morality, Culture, and History*, 91.

² Cf. Jeong-Im Kwon, 'Die Metamorphosen der Symbolischen Kunstform. Zur Rehabilitierung der ästhetischen Argumente Hegels', in Gethmann-Siebert (ed.), *Phänomen versus System*, 41ff.

³ Cf. Kwon, *Hegels Bestimmung der Kunst*, 136.

⁴ Cf. Kwon, *Hegels Bestimmung der Kunst*, 136.

⁵ Kant, 'Kritik der Urteilstkraft' / *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, 245. (The English translation contains the German Akademie edition page numbers.)

⁶ Kant, 'Kritik der Urteilstkraft' / *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, 256.

⁷ *Hotho* 1823, 35.

⁸ *Libelt* 1828/29, 63a–64.

⁹ *Anon.* 1828/29, 30a.

¹⁰ *Anon.* 1828/29, 30a; *Libelt* 1828/29, 64.

- ¹¹ *Anon.* 1828/29, 30a; *Libelt* 1828/29, 64. Another identifiable source for Hegel's association of Judaism with the aesthetic category of sublimity is the treatise on the sublime traditionally attributed to Longinus, in which the conception of divine power expressed in the command 'Let there be light' is cited as an example of genuine sublimity. Cf. Longinus, 'On the Sublime', IX. 7–10 (149). Hegel himself mentions this example and Longinus's description of it as sublime. *Anon.* 1828/29, 31a; *Libelt* 1828/29, 65a–66. I would argue, however, that it is Kant's theory of the sublime that provides Hegel with the conceptual means of explaining why Judaism is to be classed as being especially sublime as compared to the other oriental religions that he associates with the symbolic form of art.
- ¹² *von der Pfordten* 1826, 115 and 129.
- ¹³ *von der Pfordten* 1826, 111.
- ¹⁴ *Hotho* 1823, 34.
- ¹⁵ *Hotho* 1823, 34f.
- ¹⁶ *Kehler* 1826, 27.
- ¹⁷ *von der Pfordten* 1826, 112.
- ¹⁸ Kant, 'Kritik der Urteilkraft' / *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, 248.
- ¹⁹ Kant, 'Kritik der Urteilkraft' / *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, 250.
- ²⁰ Kant, 'Kritik der Urteilkraft' / *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, 257.
- ²¹ Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft/Critique of Pure Reason*, A 321ff./B 377ff. (The English translation includes first (A) and second (B) edition pagination.)
- ²² Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft/Critique of Pure Reason*, A 311/B 367.
- ²³ Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft/Critique of Pure Reason*, A 576ff./B 604ff.
- ²⁴ *Enzyklopädie* (1830) § 49.
- ²⁵ *Enzyklopädie* (1830) §§ 61–62.
- ²⁶ *Enzyklopädie* (1830) § 62A.
- ²⁷ Jacobi, 'Ueber die Lehre des Spinoza in Briefen an den Herrn Moses Mendelssohn. Erweiterungen der zweiten Auflage (1789)', 260f./'Concerning the Doctrine of Spinoza (1789)', 376.
- ²⁸ *Enzyklopädie* (1830) § 73.
- ²⁹ Hegel himself holds this conception of the unconditioned to be inadequate, however. This is because it results in an unresolved dualism, with the opposition between the infinite and finite being treated as an absolute one, thereby making the infinite into one particular next to another one, so that it must itself be thought of as finite in the sense of having its limit in something other than itself. *Enzyklopädie* (1830) § 95A.
- ³⁰ Spinoza, 'The Ethics', Part I D3.
- ³¹ *Hotho* 1823, 44.
- ³² *Enzyklopädie* (1830) §§ 107–111.
- ³³ *Hotho* 1823, 135.
- ³⁴ *von der Pfordten* 1826, 112.
- ³⁵ *Hotho* 1823, 4.
- ³⁶ *von der Pfordten* 1826, 114.
- ³⁷ *von der Pfordten* 1826, 116. Hegel himself defines the symbol as 'the figurative presentation [*bildliche Darstellung*] of a general representation [*einer allgemeinen Vorstellung*], of something inner'. *Hotho* 1823, 122.
- ³⁸ *von der Pfordten* 1826, 118.

³⁹ *von der Pfordten* 1826, 122.

⁴⁰ *von der Pfordten* 1826, 124ff.

⁴¹ *von der Pfordten* 1826, 128ff.

⁴² *Hotho* 1823, 120.

⁴³ *von der Pfordten* 1826, 125.

⁴⁴ *von der Pfordten* 1826, 115.

⁴⁵ As well as the lines 'And God said, Let there be light: and there was light', Hegel cites Psalms 90 and 104 as examples of the sublimity of Judaism. He also mentions miracles, which, because they involve God's intervention in the normal course of life, serve as examples of His absolute power. *von der Pfordten* 1826, 129f.

⁴⁶ *Hotho* 1823, 140.

⁴⁷ *von der Pfordten* 1826, 154.

⁴⁸ In the next chapter I attribute to Hegel in connection with his account of the aesthetic category of beauty the related view that the successful aesthetic presentation of any content depends on the idea that the sensory items of the presentation can be unified into a coherent whole in accordance with the nature of the content itself. This invites the objection that Hegel thereby restricts the potential of art by imposing such limits on what can be presented by means of it. In relation to this objection, it is, however, interesting that the attempt to demonstrate the full potential of art in the face of the limitations that someone like Hegel ascribes to it found in Jean-François Lyotard's theory of the sublime involves an appeal to Kant's theory of the sublime, but appears to adopt a theory of the sublime that is closer to Hegel's conception of this aesthetic category than to Kant's. Lyotard claims that Kant's theory of the sublime provides the impetus for modern art and literature, along with the axioms of the logic of the avant-gardes, because they all present the fact that the unrepresentable (*l'imprésentable*) exists, and would remain inexplicable without the idea of the incommensurability of reality to concept (i.e. the pure concepts of reason) implicit in Kant's theory of the sublime. Lyotard, 'Réponse à la question: qu'est-ce que le postmoderne?', 363f. As we have seen, this incommensurability of the content to be presented in relation to the means of its presentation is equally a feature of Hegel's account of the symbolic form of art. Indeed, the role that Lyotard assigns to the concept of the sublime in his attempt to explain the essence of modern and postmodern art appears to be closer to Hegel's account of the symbolic form of art than to Kant's theory of the sublime, because it involves identifying this concept with the idea of a content that the artist strives to present, rather than with the judging subject's response to certain objects, whose dimensions are such as to prevent representations from being combined in a single intuition. In short, Lyotard, like Hegel, appears to link the aesthetic category of the sublime to an attempt to express in sensory form a content which cannot, in fact, be fully presented in this form, though he rejects the idea that this content can be more adequately known by means of other, non-aesthetic forms of consciousness.

⁴⁹ VPR 1, 4 and 31.

⁵⁰ *Kehler* 1826, 33.

⁵¹ PR § 355.

⁵² *Hotho* 1823, 142.

⁵³ *Hotho* 1823, 212.

Chapter 2

- ¹ *Kehler* 1826, 205f.
- ² *Kehler* 1826, 208.
- ³ *Hotho* 1823, 112.
- ⁴ *Hotho* 1823, 293.
- ⁵ *Ascheberg* 1820/21, 37; *Hotho* 1823, 160; *Kehler* 1826, 208f.; *von der Pfordten* 1826, 151; *Libelt* 1828/29, 15[29] and 82a.
- ⁶ *Hotho* 1823, 293ff.
- ⁷ *Libelt* 1828/29, 82a.
- ⁸ *Ascheberg* 1820/21, 37.
- ⁹ Herodotus, *Herodotus I*, Book II 53.
- ¹⁰ *von der Pfordten* 1826, 150.
- ¹¹ *Anon.* 1828/29, 13b.
- ¹² *Hotho* 1823, 292.
- ¹³ *Kehler* 1826, 208.
- ¹⁴ *Hotho* 1823, 296.
- ¹⁵ *Hotho* 1823, 12f.
- ¹⁶ VG 263/213.
- ¹⁷ *Anon.* 1828/29, 21b.
- ¹⁸ *Hotho* 1823, 47.
- ¹⁹ *Enzyklopädie* (1830) § 213.
- ²⁰ *von der Pfordten* 1826, 64.
- ²¹ *Hotho* 1823, 48.
- ²² *Enzyklopädie* (1830) § 163.
- ²³ *Hotho* 1823, 44.
- ²⁴ PhG 63ff./58ff.
- ²⁵ *Enzyklopädie* (1830) § 418A.
- ²⁶ *Hotho* 1823, 79.
- ²⁷ *Hotho* 1823, 32.
- ²⁸ *Hotho* 1823, 32.
- ²⁹ *Hotho* 1823, 170.
- ³⁰ PhG 241/266.
- ³¹ *von der Pfordten* 1826, 250.
- ³² *Hotho* 1823, 302ff.
- ³³ *Hotho* 1823, 303.
- ³⁴ *Hotho* 1823, 302; *von der Pfordten* 1826, 95f.
- ³⁵ *Hotho* 1823, 95.
- ³⁶ There is, however, a tendency to identify one party to the conflict between the divine law and the human law as being alone in the right. For an account of this tendency and the problems with it, see Stern, *Hegel and the Phenomenology of Spirit*, 139ff. For a balanced account of Hegel's views on tragedy, see Stephan Houlgate, 'Hegel's Theory of Tragedy', in Houlgate (ed.), *Hegel and the Arts*.
- ³⁷ PhG 255/283.
- ³⁸ PhG 256/285.
- ³⁹ PhG 243/269.
- ⁴⁰ PhG 245f./272.

- ⁴¹ *Ascheberg* 1820/21, 321.
⁴² *Hotho* 1823, 311; *Anon.* 1828/29, 158.
⁴³ Cf. Gethmann-Siefert, *Einführung in Hegels Ästhetik*, 138ff.
⁴⁴ *Kehler* 1826, 34; *von der Pfordten* 1826, 74.
⁴⁵ *Enzyklopädie* (1830) § 562.

Chapter 3

- ¹ Cf. Jaeschke, *Reason in Religion*, 206.
² *Enzyklopädie* (1830) § 567.
³ *Hotho* 1823, 33.
⁴ PhG 406/460.
⁵ *Hotho* 1823, 158.
⁶ *Kehler* 1826, 136; *von der Pfordten* 1826, 160.
⁷ PhG 407/461f.
⁸ PhG 108/110.
⁹ PhG 408/462.
¹⁰ *Hotho* 1823, 34.
¹¹ *Hotho* 1823, 183.
¹² Art can, however, be seen to have at least two important roles in the Christian world: (1) to lend permanency to the appearance of the divine (i.e. the Incarnation and life of Christ) through the artistic portrayal of this unique event that could only ever happen once; (2) to give sensory expression to the deep division that spirit undergoes in the Christian religion and to the overcoming of this division in an inwardness that is reconciled with itself. Cf. Jaeschke, 'Kunst und Religion', 185.
¹³ *Hotho* 1823, 43.
¹⁴ *von der Pfordten* 1826, 73.
¹⁵ This understanding of the transition of art to religion can be expressed as the idea that there is a contradiction built into the very concept of art: art must fail because it attempts to do something which cannot be done with the means it is committed to using if it wishes to remain art. Cf. Geuss, *Morality, Culture, and History*, 93.
¹⁶ *Kehler* 1826, 135; *von der Pfordten* 1826, 158.
¹⁷ *Enzyklopädie* (1830) § 20A; VPR 1, 296.
¹⁸ PhG 420f./478.
¹⁹ *Enzyklopädie* (1830) § 459.
²⁰ *Libelt* 1828/29, 143a. This thought is recorded slightly differently in the other available transcript from the last lecture series, but the basic idea is the same. *Anon.* 1828/29, 89b.
²¹ *Anon.* 1828/29, 10a.
²² *Libelt* 1828/29, 65a.
²³ *Hotho* 1823, 44.
²⁴ *Kehler* 1826, 136; *von der Pfordten* 1826, 159.
²⁵ *Kehler* 1826, 136.
²⁶ VPR 1, 293.
²⁷ *Hotho* 1823, 275.

- ²⁸ VPR 1, 294.
- ²⁹ Cf. Strauss, *In Defense of my 'Life of Jesus' against the Hegelians*, 3.
- ³⁰ Cf. Strauss, *In Defense of my 'Life of Jesus' against the Hegelians*, 38.
- ³¹ VPR 1, 285.
- ³² Cf. Löwith, 'Hegels Aufhebung der christlichen Religion', 194.
- ³³ Cf. Theunissen, *Hegels Lehre vom absoluten Geist*, 211.
- ³⁴ Kehler 1826, 135; *von der Pfordten* 1826, 159.
- ³⁵ Cf. Theunissen, *Hegels Lehre vom absoluten Geist*, 235ff.
- ³⁶ Cf. Theunissen, *Hegels Lehre vom absoluten Geist*, 235.
- ³⁷ Cf. Theunissen, *Hegels Lehre vom absoluten Geist*, 235f.
- ³⁸ Cf. Theunissen, *Hegels Lehre vom absoluten Geist*, 237f.
- ³⁹ The fact that this is what Theunissen has in mind is suggested by his claim that Hegel has need of another argument in addition to the one that is to establish the necessity of the divine-human unity. This additional argument is needed in order to establish that 'God revealed himself in a single human being in order that the unity of the human and divine natures, which thought has grasped distinctly, might also become clear and certain to the type of consciousness which is dependent on sensory experience.' Theunissen, *Hegels Lehre vom absoluten Geist*, 240. A similar idea seems to be at work in the claim that Hegel's philosophy presupposes 'historically' that the Incarnation of God in Christ has for the Christian community already taken place. Cf. Yerkes, *The Christology of Hegel*, 112. This claim is an ambiguous one, however: for it could be taken to mean only that the representation of the Incarnation must have already entered consciousness.
- ⁴⁰ Cf. Theunissen, *Hegels Lehre vom absoluten Geist*, 238.
- ⁴¹ Theunissen is himself aware of this problem. Cf. Theunissen, *Hegels Lehre vom absoluten Geist*, 239.
- ⁴² Cf. Jaeschke, *Reason in Religion*, 319ff.
- ⁴³ Cf. Strauss, *Das Leben Jesu*, vol. 1, 71ff.
- ⁴⁴ Strauss, *Das Leben Jesu*, vol. 1, 74. The process through which the gospels are produced is admittedly an opaque one as Strauss presents it. Strauss's position was therefore subsequently criticized by another left Hegelian, Bruno Bauer, who objected to the mysterious nature of the process whereby the content of the gospels was formed in the course of the transmission of the traditions concerning the life of Jesus developed by the early Christian community. For Bauer, the origins of this content are instead to be located in self-consciousness itself, with the gospels being of a purely literary origin in regard to both their content and their form; while it is always a single writer who is responsible for each individual work, not the community, which, Bauer argues, could itself never have given determinate form and unity to the content found in such works. Cf. Bauer, *Kritik der evangelischen Geschichte der Synoptiker*, vol. 1, xiv.f. and 69.
- ⁴⁵ Hotho 1823, 23.
- ⁴⁶ VPR 3, 106.
- ⁴⁷ Cf. Lukács, *The Young Hegel*, 18ff.
- ⁴⁸ Cf. Strauss, *Das Leben Jesu*, vol. 2, 730. Strauss's own explanation of the final moment of this process is to be found in his account of the God-man, in which he argues that the predicates which the Church ascribes to a single individual, that is, the two natures, the finite and the infinite, or human and divine, are only in

harmony with each other in the idea of the human race, whereas they contradict each other when predicated of Christ, who is a single individual. Cf. Strauss, *Das Leben Jesu*, vol. 2, 734f. Strauss thus appears to overcome the contradiction found in the doctrine of the Incarnation by reducing the two natures to that of the human and finite, thereby ignoring altogether Christ's divinity.

⁴⁹ *Enzyklopädie* (1830) § 482A.

⁵⁰ *Anon.* 1828/29, 46b; *Libelt* 1828/29, 91.

⁵¹ PR § 258A.

⁵² *Briefe*, vol. II, 28f./307.

⁵³ PR § 5.

⁵⁴ PR § 5A.

⁵⁵ PR § 209A.

⁵⁶ PR § 35A.

⁵⁷ PR §§ 14–15.

⁵⁸ PR § 6.

⁵⁹ PR § 7. The idea that the individual will is the unity of the moments of universality and particularity could be thought to suggest that Hegel ultimately seeks to base his philosophy of right on his logic, in which the moments of the logical concept are identified as being universality, particularity and individuality. However, it might be equally said that the will can be explained in terms of the ideas of universality, particularity and universality, and that it is only afterwards that this explanation turns out, on reflection, to correspond to the moments of the logical concept. In this respect, the further step of explaining the concept of the will in terms of Hegel's logic might be resisted.

⁶⁰ PR § 35.

⁶¹ PR § 104.

⁶² PR § 124.

⁶³ PR § 20.

⁶⁴ PR § 260.

⁶⁵ VG 62/54.

⁶⁶ PR § 4.

⁶⁷ PR § 29.

⁶⁸ TJS 221ff./154ff.

⁶⁹ *Hotho* 1823, 178.

⁷⁰ VPR 1, 347. Hegel points out, however, that this religion may itself have no connection to the principles of freedom, and may thus give rise to an unresolved opposition between the state and religion.

⁷¹ Cf. Rousseau, *The Social Contract*, 59ff.

⁷² Hegel accordingly criticizes Rousseau for considering the will only in 'the determinate form of the *individual will*', and of regarding the universal will 'only as the *common element* arising out of this individual will'. PR § 258A.

⁷³ *Enzyklopädie* (1830) § 436.

⁷⁴ Cf. Ritter, *Hegel and the French Revolution*, 62.

⁷⁵ Cf. Jaeschke, 'Christianity and Secularity in Hegel's Concept of the State'.

⁷⁶ The term 'end of mythology', understood as being analogous to the idea of the end of art, is employed by Walter Jaeschke, who uses it in relation to the impossibility of reproducing in the Christian world the unity of art and mythology that

Hegel finds in ancient Greek ethical life, given the way in which the kind of reconciliation promised by Christianity presupposes an opposition between the subject and the world. Jaeschke goes on to argue that for Hegel the Christian religion cannot itself, even in its highest form (i.e. Protestantism), bring about the reconciliation that it promises, so that a new stage different not only from the Greek religion of beautiful art but also from religion in general becomes necessary, namely, the stage of philosophy. This leads Jaeschke to speak of the ‘end of religion’ as well as the ‘end of mythology’ and the ‘end of art’. Cf. Jaeschke, ‘Kunst und Religion’. I have chosen to speak of the end of mythology rather than the end of religion in connection with the Christian religion and its relation to the purely conceptual kind of knowledge that Hegel associates with philosophy because it better captures the idea that Christianity can itself be thought to involve a mythic form of consciousness. I shall return to the issue of the ‘end of mythology’ in Chapter 6, where the idea that myth may serve to present ethical ideas will be shown to extend beyond the realm of religion by lending itself to a purely secular interpretation.

⁷⁷ *Hotho* 1823, 41.

⁷⁸ A similar claim has already been made on the basis of the *Hotho* edition of the lectures. Cf. Donoghó, ‘Remarks on “Humanus heißt der Heilige . . .”’ Donoghó detects an ironic tone in the passage which he cites as evidence that humanity for Hegel forms the new, quasi-religious object of art, and he takes this ironic tone to mark Hegel’s ‘authentic presence behind the words’. The claim that Hegel’s attitude towards the manifestations of this art that makes humanity its object is an ironical one is problematic, however. For a start, Donoghó’s detection of an allegedly ironic tone appears to be entirely based on the fact that the passage cited by him as evidence that Hegel speaks of humanity as the new quasi-religious object of art is found next to Hegel’s accounts of ‘subjective humour’ and irony, which are both, according to Hegel, highly subjectivist in nature. Yet the passage that Donoghó cites is not to be found in the student transcripts of the lectures available to me, which cover all the different lecture series. Nor are any similar passages to be found in the section on the romantic form of art, which is where Hegel discusses subjective humour. Moreover, as I have argued in the course of this chapter, the way in which humanity becomes the new object of art represents part of a more general process whereby humanity, through philosophy, becomes progressively conscious of itself as the true subject and object of religion; and there are consequently some grounds for thinking that Hegel’s attitude towards some of the artistic manifestations of this process would not have been an ironic one, just as his attitude towards the legal and institutional products of this process is clearly not an ironic one.

⁷⁹ *Hotho* 1823, 26.

⁸⁰ *von der Pfordten* 1826, 54.

Chapter 4

¹ Cf. Gethmann-Siebert, ‘Das “moderne” Gesamtkunstwerk. Die Oper’, 170f.

² Cf. Oelmüller, ‘Hegels Satz vom Ende der Kunst und das Problem der Philosophie der Kunst nach Hegel’.

- ³ PR § 25.
- ⁴ *Hotho* 1823, 37.
- ⁵ *Hotho* 1823, 291.
- ⁶ PR § 124A.
- ⁷ *Hotho* 1823, 202.
- ⁸ *von der Pfordten* 1826, 172f.
- ⁹ *Hotho* 1823, 37.
- ¹⁰ Cf. Gethmann-Siefert, 'Hegels These vom Ende der Kunst und der Klassizismus der Ästhetik', 212.
- ¹¹ *Kehler* 1826, 20ff.; *von der Pfordten* 1826, 62ff; *Anon.* 1828/29, 11a–11b; *Libelt* 1828/29, 24a[48]–26[51].
- ¹² Cf. Gethmann-Siefert, 'Hegel über Kunst und Alltäglichkeit'.
- ¹³ Quoted in Nicolin (ed.), *Hegel in Berichten seiner Zeitgenossen*, No. 460.
- ¹⁴ Kierkegaard may in fact have been influenced by the aesthetic theory of the Danish Hegelian Johan Ludvig Heiberg (1791–1860). Heiberg's version of the form-content distinction appears to differ significantly from Hegel's version of it, however. For Hegel identifies form with the sensory material used to express the content, whereas Heiberg identifies it with the idea of the artist, in accordance with which he shapes the material, and he identifies the content with matter, that is, the raw sensory material that is to be shaped in accordance with the idea of the artist. Cf. Stewart, *Kierkegaard's Relations to Hegel Reconsidered*, 210ff.
- ¹⁵ Kierkegaard, *Either/Or: Part I*, 47f.
- ¹⁶ Kierkegaard, *Either/Or: Part I*, 52f.
- ¹⁷ Kierkegaard, *Either/Or: Part I*, 57.
- ¹⁸ Kierkegaard, *Either/Or: Part I*, 56f. Also see 64 and 70f.
- ¹⁹ Kierkegaard, *Either/Or: Part I*, 92.
- ²⁰ Kierkegaard, *Either/Or: Part I*, 74f.
- ²¹ Cf. Gethmann-Siefert, 'Das "moderne" Gesamtkunstwerk. Die Oper', 208.
- ²² For an account of Hegel's understanding of the opera as a *Gesamtkunstwerk* and what distinguishes it from the modern drama, see Olivier, *Hegel et la Musique*, 201ff.
- ²³ Cf. Gethmann-Siefert, 'Das "moderne" Gesamtkunstwerk. Die Oper', 213f. The idea of beauty here seems to rely on a conventional notion of beauty that I have argued is not contained in Hegel's account of the ideal. However, although his account of the latter does not, in my view, license such a conception of beauty, this does not mean that Hegel did not himself employ such a conventional notion of beauty in his lectures on aesthetics.
- ²⁴ Cf. Gethmann-Siefert, 'Das "moderne" Gesamtkunstwerk. Die Oper', 215.
- ²⁵ *von der Pfordten* 1826, 246.
- ²⁶ Cf. Olivier, *Hegel et la Musique*, 209ff.
- ²⁷ Cf. Gethmann-Siefert, 'Das "moderne" Gesamtkunstwerk. Die Oper', 216.
- ²⁸ Cf. Gethmann-Siefert, 'Das "moderne" Gesamtkunstwerk. Die Oper', 217ff.
- ²⁹ Cf. Gethmann-Siefert, 'Das "moderne" Gesamtkunstwerk. Die Oper', 218f.
- ³⁰ Kierkegaard, *Either/Or: Part I*, 61.
- ³¹ Kierkegaard, *Either/Or: Part I*, 87f.
- ³² *von der Pfordten* 1826, 157.
- ³³ PR § 163.

Chapter 5

- ¹ Henrich, 'The Contemporary Relevance of Hegel's Aesthetics', 200f.
- ² Henrich, 'The Contemporary Relevance of Hegel's Aesthetics', 201.
- ³ *von der Pfordten* 1826, 171.
- ⁴ *Kehler* 1826, 152f.; *von der Pfordten* 1826, 172.
- ⁵ Lukács, *The Theory of the Novel*, 66.
- ⁶ *von der Pfordten* 1826, 139.
- ⁷ *Kehler* 1826, 217; *von der Pfordten* 1826, 240.
- ⁸ *Hotho* 1823, 116; *von der Pfordten* 1826, 107.
- ⁹ Cf. Lukács, *The Theory of the Novel*, 15.
- ¹⁰ Lukács, *Studies in European Realism*, 5.
- ¹¹ Cf. Hardimon, *Hegel's Social Philosophy*. According to Hardimon, Hegel maintains that reflective individuals in the modern world experience 'pure subjective' alienation. This is because they feel estranged from their social world, which they regard as alien and hostile, even though this world is in fact a home, so that the form of alienation they suffer from cannot be thought to contain an objective element. I intend to show, however, that the way in which the modern epic reflects the essential nature of modern ethical life suggests that Hegel might have acknowledged that this experience of alienation can have both a subjective and an objective aspect.
- ¹² *Hotho* 1823, 105.
- ¹³ *Hotho* 1823, 197.
- ¹⁴ *von der Pfordten* 1826, 240.
- ¹⁵ *Hotho* 1823, 105.
- ¹⁶ *Kehler* 1826, 217.
- ¹⁷ *Kehler* 1826, 151.
- ¹⁸ *Anon.* 1828/29, 18a–18b; *Libelt* 1828/29, 37[73].
- ¹⁹ *Hotho* 1823, 297.
- ²⁰ *Hotho* 1823, 109f.
- ²¹ *Hotho* 1823, 86 and 292.
- ²² *Hotho* 1823, 87.
- ²³ *Hotho* 1823, 88.
- ²⁴ PR § 150A. See also *Hotho* 1823, 85f.; *Kehler* 1826, 45; *von der Pfordten* 1826, 85f. In the 1826 lectures, Hercules is in fact specifically identified with the ideal.
- ²⁵ *Hotho* 1823, 85.
- ²⁶ *Hotho* 1823, 86; *Libelt* 1828/29, 35[69]–35a[70].
- ²⁷ For a list of the ethical duties that arise in this way, see Peperzak, 'Hegels Pflichten- und Tugendlehre', 116f.
- ²⁸ PR § 150.
- ²⁹ *Hotho* 1823, 197. For Hegel, Schiller's dramas provide the model of how the actions performed by heroic individuals in modern drama in this respect lack the same universal function and significance of the actions of the Greek heroes, as portrayed in ancient drama and epic poetry. Cf. Gethmann-Siefert, *Die Funktion der Kunst in der Geschichte*, 347ff.
- ³⁰ Cf. Lukács, *Studies in European Realism*, 155.
- ³¹ Cf. Lukács, *The Historical Novel*, 81ff.

- ³² Cf. Lukács, *Studies in European Realism*, 63.
- ³³ Cf. Balzac, *Illusions perdues*, 56ff.
- ³⁴ PR § 277.
- ³⁵ Cf. Balzac, *Illusions perdues*, 70.
- ³⁶ PR §§ 304–305. The estate of trade and industry for Hegel comprises the branches of craftsmanship, manufacture and commerce. PR § 204. He can therefore be taken to mean by this estate, broadly speaking, the urban middle class, that is to say, the modern element represented in Balzac's novel by the inhabitants of L'Houmeau.
- ³⁷ PR § 204.
- ³⁸ PR § 3A.
- ³⁹ PR § 306.
- ⁴⁰ VG 62f./54f.
- ⁴¹ PR § 238.
- ⁴² PR § 182.
- ⁴³ PR § 192Z.
- ⁴⁴ VRP 1824/25, 491.
- ⁴⁵ PR §236.
- ⁴⁶ Cf. Riedel, *Between Tradition and Revolution*, 107ff. Also see Chamley, *Economie Politique et Philosophie chez Steuart et Hegel*; Chamley 'Les origines de la pensée économique de Hegel'; and Waszek, *The Scottish Enlightenment and Hegel's Account of 'Civil Society'*.
- ⁴⁷ PR § 189.
- ⁴⁸ VRP 1819/20, 149.
- ⁴⁹ VRP 1819/20, 150; VRP 1824/25, 472.
- ⁵⁰ Cf. Lukács, *Studies in European Realism*, 54ff.
- ⁵¹ Balzac, *Illusions perdues*, 485. Thus, oddly enough, while Lucien was entering into the workings of the immense machine of journalism, at the risk of leaving there his honour and his intelligence in tatters, David Séchard, in the depths of his printing works, was embracing the movement of the periodical press in its material consequences. He wished to place the means in harmony with the result towards which the spirit of the age was tending.
- ⁵² Cf. Balzac, *Illusions perdues*, 29.
- ⁵³ PR § 198.
- ⁵⁴ Lukács, *Studies in European Realism*, 49.
- ⁵⁵ PR § 65.
- ⁵⁶ PR § 68.
- ⁵⁷ PR § 68A.
- ⁵⁸ Balzac, *Illusions perdues*, 218. Lucien crossed the Pont-Neuf prey to a thousand reflections. What he had understood of that commercial slang had made him see that, for those booksellers, books were as cotton hats are for hosiers, goods to sell at a high price and to buy cheaply. I was mistaken, he said to himself, struck nevertheless by the brutal and material appearance that literature was assuming.
- ⁵⁹ Cf. Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness*, 83ff.
- ⁶⁰ PR § 195.
- ⁶¹ Lukács, *Studies in European Realism*, 55.

- ⁶² Lukács describes it in this way on the grounds that it portrays ‘the tragic self-dissolution of *bourgeois* ideals by their own economic basis, by the forces of capitalism’. Lukács, *Studies in European Realism*, 47.
- ⁶³ *Hotho* 1823, 115.
- ⁶⁴ Cf. McCumber, ‘Hegel’s Anarchistic Utopia’.

Chapter 6

- ¹ Cf. Jennings, *Georges Sorel*, 116ff.
- ² Sorel, *Réflexions sur la violence*, 21 / *Reflections on Violence*, 20.
- ³ Sorel, *Réflexions sur la violence*, 21 / *Reflections on Violence*, 20.
- ⁴ Sorel, *Réflexions sur la violence*, 21 / *Reflections on Violence*, 20.
- ⁵ Sorel, *Réflexions sur la violence*, 89f. / *Reflections on Violence*, 88f.
- ⁶ It is open to question, however, whether David himself saw this painting, which he completed several years before the French Revolution, as containing a radical message. For a brief account of the painting’s context and reception, see Schama, *Citizens*, 143f.
- ⁷ Sorel, *Réflexions sur la violence*, 80 / *Reflections on Violence*, 78f.
- ⁸ As Sorel himself puts it, ‘The general strike destroys the theoretical consequences of every possible social policy; its supporters look upon even the most popular reforms as having a bourgeois character’. Sorel, *Réflexions sur la violence*, 129 / *Reflections on Violence*, 126. The general strike is therefore not to be confused with ordinary industrial strikes which aim to secure better conditions or higher wages and thus presuppose an acceptance of the social and economic relations governing capitalist society.
- ⁹ Sorel, *Réflexions sur la violence*, 164 / *Reflections on Violence*, 161.
- ¹⁰ Sorel, *Réflexions sur la violence*, 21 / *Reflections on Violence*, 20.
- ¹¹ Sorel, *Réflexions sur la violence*, 120f. / *Reflections on Violence*, 118.
- ¹² Cf. Leszek Kołakowski, ‘Georges Sorel: A Jansenist Marxist’, 161. Kołakowski argues that the Fascists were right to claim Sorel as one of their own, whereas his connection with Marxism is to be regarded as an accidental one. The connection that I establish between Sorel’s and Hegel’s views on the function of myth and the tensions inherent within the modern, capitalist state suggest, however, that, in *Reflections on Violence*, Sorel’s theory of myth is essentially leftist in nature, and that it can be thought to have a rational basis.
- ¹³ Sorel, *Réflexions sur la violence*, 66 / *Reflections on Violence*, 65.
- ¹⁴ Sorel, *Réflexions sur la violence*, 286 / *Reflections on Violence*, 279f.
- ¹⁵ Sorel, *Réflexions sur la violence*, 241ff. / *Reflections on Violence*, 238f.
- ¹⁶ Sorel, *Réflexions sur la violence*, 86 / *Reflections on Violence*, 85.
- ¹⁷ Sorel, *Réflexions sur la violence*, 254 / *Reflections on Violence*, 250.
- ¹⁸ PR § 93A & Z.
- ¹⁹ VRP 1819/20, 193.
- ²⁰ PR §§ 245, 248Z.
- ²¹ Dieter Henrich, for example, appears to reduce the problem to that of providing the poor with the means to live when he seeks to base his claim that the poor have a right to rebel on the idea of a right of necessity. Cf. Henrich, ‘Einleitung der

Herausgebers. Vernunft in Verwirklichung', 20. For Hegel, the right of necessity can be invoked when a person infringes another person's property rights in order to preserve his own life, as when he steals a loaf of bread in order not to starve. PR § 127. In the light of this, Henrich cites the following passage from Hegel's 1819/20 lectures on the philosophy of right, in which Hegel concerns himself with the plight of the poor, in support of his claim that for Hegel the poor have the right to rebel: 'We earlier considered the right of necessity [*Notrecht*] in relation to a momentary need. Here necessity [*Not*] no longer has this merely momentary character'. VRP 1819/20, 196.

²² PR § 244.

²³ PR § 123 and §124 A.

²⁴ PR § 147A.

²⁵ VPR 1824/25, 482.

²⁶ PR § 147A.

²⁷ VRP 1819/20, 195.

²⁸ PR § 243.

²⁹ PR § 250

³⁰ PR §§ 252–254.

³¹ PR § 253.

³² Gans, *Naturrecht und Universalrechtsgeschichte*, 93.

³³ PR § 249.

³⁴ PR § 308.

³⁵ PR § 301A, § 303A.

³⁶ Marx, *Early Writings*, 256.

³⁷ Cf. Breckman, *Marx, the Young Hegelians, and the Origins of Radical Social Theory*, 150.

³⁸ VPR 1819/20, 196.

³⁹ Eduard Gans's theory of 'free corporations' already represents a significant step in this direction, for it modernizes Hegel's understanding of the corporation by conceiving the latter as 'a horizontal mode of association that corresponds to the division of industrial society into classes and the different interests of wage-labourers and employers'. Breckman, *Marx, the Young Hegelians, and the Origins of Radical Social Theory*, 171ff.

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